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Bengal teachers who lost jobs head to Delhi to protest

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Investors' wealth erodes by Rs 11.30L cr amid tariff war

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Punjab Kings in pitch dilemma at Mullanpur

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DIGITAL ENGLISH DAILY, BENGALURU

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PHOTO: BLUE ORIGIN

Bezos launches 1st all-women civilian crew with Katy

WASHINGTON, 14 APRIL

Jeff Bezos' Blue Origin launched his fiancee Lauren Sanchez into space Monday with an all-female celebrity crew that included Katy Perry and Gayle King. It was the latest wave in space tourism, where more of the rich and famous than ever before — or lucky and well-connected — can enter the zero-gravity realm traditionally dominated by professional astronauts. The New Shepard rocket blasted off on the quick up-and-down trip from West Texas. The fringes of space beckoned 107 kilometres up and provided a few precious minutes of weightlessness. Sanchez, a helicopter pilot and former TV journalist, invited the others along for the 10-minute, fully automated flight, packing on the star power with singer-songwriter Perry and "CBS Mornings" co-host King. Moved by the views of Earth below, Perry said she couldn't resist singing "What a Wonderful World" in space. Blue Origin declined to say how much the flight cost or who paid what. The trip came two months before Sanchez and Bezos marry in Venice. *—PTI*

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Law catches up with PNB scam fugitive Choksi after 8 years

He was held in Belgium after India's appeal

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

Fugitive diamantaire Mehul Choksi, a key accused in the Rs 13,000 crore Punjab National Bank (PNB) loan fraud, has been arrested in Belgium following an extradition request from Indian probe agencies.

Choksi, 65, was taken into custody in Antwerp on 12 April by Belgian police, based on requests by the Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) and Enforcement Directorate (ED). He becomes the second prime suspect apprehended in the case after his nephew Nirav Modi.

Belgium's Federal Public Service of Justice confirmed the arrest. Choksi had reportedly arrived in Belgium in November 2023 citing medical treatment. Earlier, the Interpol Red Notice against him was withdrawn following his appeal, prompting India to pursue extradition.

India and Belgium have a long-standing extradition treaty, under which two arrest warrants (2018 and 2021) from a Mumbai special court were shared to support the request. Legal teams from the ED and CBI are now working with Belgian authorities. Choksi is expected to seek release on medical grounds, claiming he is undergoing cancer treatment and has requested admission to a Swiss hospital.

Choksi's lawyer Vijay Agarwal confirmed his client's custody and said an appeal would be filed seeking permission for Choksi to oppose extradition without being held in detention. The defence will argue that Choksi is not a flight risk, is seriously ill, and that Indian prison conditions are inhumane, labelling the case as politically motivated.

The CBI has filed two chargesheets and the ED three prosecution complaints. The ED has also attached assets worth Rs 2,565.90 crore, with courts permitting restitution.

In its supplementary chargesheet, the CBI stated: "Since the accused companies did not repay the amount availed against the said fraudulent LoUs and FLCs, PNB made the payment of Rs 6,344.97 crore, including overdue interest, to the overseas banks which had advanced buyer's credit and discounted the bills against the fraudulent instruments issued by PNB." *—PTI*

THE ₹13,000 CRORE SCAM

- Mehul Choksi and nephew Nirav Modi at their firm Gitanjali Gems allegedly manipulated banking systems to obtain fraudulent Letters of Undertaking (LoUs).
- The targets: PNB's Brady House branch in Mumbai in March 2011.
- Choksi got 1,212 guarantees in next six years.
- The fraud went undetected for years due to involvement of bank insiders, including then Deputy General Manager Gokulnath Shetty.
- Choksi and Modi used the guarantees to get loans from the overseas branches of Indian banks, claiming to need the cash to import pearls. The funds, however, were allegedly laundered.
- The other banks involved are: SBI, Mauritius; Allahabad Bank, Hong Kong; Axis Bank, Hong Kong; Bank of India, Antwerp; Canara Bank, Manama; and SBI, Frankfurt.

AT LARGE SINCE 2017

2017: Fearing arrest, Choksi acquired citizenship of Antigua and Barbuda, which doesn't have an active extradition treaty with India.

2018: Choksi fled the country on 2 January. He flew to US, and then to Antigua. After this, CBI and ED registered cases against Choksi and Modi.

2019: Modi was arrested in London in May. His extradition to India is awaited to this day.

2021: Choksi was detained in Dominica, while allegedly attempting to flee to Cuba by boat. India's extradition was rejected. He was deported to Antigua.

2023: Interpol revoked the Red Notice against Choksi in March.

2024: Diagnosed with cancer, Choksi moved to Belgium. He and his wife Preeti, who is a Belgian citizen, were able to secure a legal residency.

2025: Choksi was detained in Belgium, after a renewed extradition plea by the CBI and ED.

Out on picnic with fiancé, UP girl gangraped

KASGANJ/ VARANASI, 14 APRIL

Eight men were arrested for allegedly raping a 16-year-old girl here, police said on Monday.

On 10 April, the girl, along with a 17-year-old with whom her marriage had been fixed, had gone to get her ration card prepared, they said.

At about 2.30 pm, when she was sitting near a canal with her fiancé after returning from the DSO office, Yogesh, Ajay and seven to eight unidentified men came there, the police said.

The accused took them into separate bushes. While three men raped the girl, others took her gold earrings and Rs 5,000 cash and also forcibly got Rs 5,000 transferred from her fiance's mobile through UPI, the victim alleged in her complaint.

An FIR in this regard was registered under BNS sections 70 (gangrape), 126 (2) (wrongful restraint), 308 (5) (extortion) among others and the POCSO Act on April 12, the police said. Kasganj SP Ankita Sharma said so far eight people have been arrested in the matter and sent to jail while efforts are on to nab two others. *—PTI*

Charred remains of police vehicles that were set on fire allegedly by members of Indian Secular Front during a protest march to Kolkata over Waqf Act, at Bhangar in South 24 Parganas, West Bengal on Monday **PHOTO: PTI**

After Murshidabad, South Parganas erupts in clashes over Waqf Act

KOLKATA/ MURSHIDABAD/MALDA, 14 APRIL

Fresh episodes of Waqf (Amendment) Act-related violence rocked Bhangar area in West Bengal's South 24 Parganas district on Monday, even as police claimed that law and order situation in the previous riot epicentre of Murshidabad remained largely under control.

The clashes erupted when police stopped (Indian Secular Front) ISF supporters near Bhojerhat from heading towards Ramlila Maidan in central Kolkata to attend an anti-Waqf Act rally addressed by party leader and Bhangar MLA Naushad Siddique which did not have proper police permission.

"Some police vehicles were set on fire by the protesters and a few police personnel were injured when the agitators attacked the law enforcers," a senior police officer said. Eyewitnesses said police resorted to lathicharge to disperse them. At least one ISF worker sustained a head injury.

ISF activists sat on a protest on the highway, leading to long traffic snarls along the stretch. A large police force, was deployed to disperse the protesters and bring the situation under control.

Addressing the gathering in Kolkata, Siddique said, "This law is not just an attack on Muslims, it is an assault on the Constitution. We won't accept this Act. The government that supports such laws must go," he said. According to police, the rallyists were stopped near Bhojerhat on the Basanti Highway, where a large number of ISF workers had gathered from Bhangar as well as neighbouring areas such as Minakhan and Sandeshkhali. Tension escalated when the crowd attempted to break through police barricades, leading to a clash between the two sides. *—PTI*

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REMEMBERING AMBEDKAR

CM Siddaramaiah and Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar pay tribute to BR Ambedkar on his birth anniversary, at Vidhana Soudha in Bengaluru on Monday **PHOTO: MOHAMMED ASAD**

Will comment on caste report after Cabinet meet, says CM

BENGALURU, 14 APRIL

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah announced that he would comment on the caste census report only following a special cabinet meeting scheduled for 17 April. Speaking to reporters after paying tribute to BR Ambedkar on his 134th birthday, Siddaramaiah indicated that he would refrain from discussing the matter until after the cabinet convenes.

On 11 April, the Karnataka cabinet approved the Socio-Economic and Educational Survey, more commonly referred to as the caste census. The report was prepared by the State Backward Classes Commission, then led by H. Kantharaju. The survey was completed in 2018 towards the end of Siddaramaiah's first term, while his successor, K. Jayaprakash Hegde, finalised the report in February 2024.

Siddaramaiah dismissed allegations from the BJP that Congress had failed Ambedkar in a past Lok Sabha election as unfounded, referencing a letter in which Ambedkar attributed his defeat to both Hindutva ideologue Vinayak Damodar Savarkar and Communist leader Sripad Amrut Dange. Furthermore, he charged that the BJP attempts to co-opt figures such as Gandhi, Ambedkar, and Sardar Vallabhbhai Patel, despite their historical opposition to these leaders and their ideals. *—PTI*

VOKKALIGAS' MEET TODAY

Deputy Chief Minister DK Shivakumar will discuss with Congress legislators from his Vokkaliga community on Tuesday, and seek their opinion on the caste census, which was recently tabled before the state cabinet. Vokkaliags and Lingayats led by their seers or apex bodies have expressed reservations about the survey, calling it "unscientific".

TELANGANA 1ST STATE TO IMPLEMENT SC CATEGORISATION

HYDERABAD, 14 APRIL

The Telangana government has officially begun the implementation of Scheduled Castes (SC) categorisation, becoming the first state in India to do so, as announced by Irrigation Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy. This landmark decision follows the recommendations of a commission led by retired High Court Judge Justice Shameem Akther, which advised that the 59 SC communities be divided into three groups to allocate a total of 15 per cent reservation in government jobs and educational institutions. *—PTI*

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'FIGHT FOR OUR IDENTITY'

Congress leader Mansoor Khan moves SC against Waqf Act

BENGALURU/NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

Senior Congress leader and a prominent voice in the Muslim community, Mansoor Ali Khan, has filed a petition in the Supreme Court challenging the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025, calling it a direct assault on the religious and constitutional rights of India's minorities.

Represented by advocate Shivangi Anand, Khan's legal team also submitted an urgent letter to the Supreme Court Registrar, stating the Act "undermines the rights of communities to administer their own religious affairs" and has a "chilling effect" on religious and associational freedoms.

The apex court is scheduled to hear a bunch of petitions filed by politicians, religious leaders and civic activists, challenging the Act on 16 April. President Droupadi Murmu gave assent to the contentious Bill on 9 April.

Explaining the reasons behind the legal challenge, Khan stated: "This law isn't reform—it's an attempt to take control of what generations of our people have built with faith, love, and sacrifice. This is not just about land or property. It is about dignity, autonomy, and the right to serve our community on our own terms."

> **Our schools, hospitals, and places of worship have always stood as pillars of care and service—not just for Muslims, but for all. This law threatens their very existence. Once lost, these spaces cannot be reclaimed**
>
> —Mansoor Ali Khan

The amendment, passed without adequate consultation, empowers government-appointed officers to unilaterally reclassify centuries-old mosques, dargahs, and community properties as "non-Waqf". It sidelines judicial oversight, restricts new religious endowments, and weakens the very institutions meant to safeguard Waqf assets, the petition maintained.

Khan, an educationist said: "Our schools, hospitals, and places of worship have always stood as pillars of care and service—not just for Muslims, but for all. This law threatens their very existence. Once lost, these spaces cannot be reclaimed." The petition underscores the need for immediate judicial intervention to prevent irreversible damage.

Reaffirming the spirit behind his plea, Khan said: "This is not about politics. It's about protecting the legacy of service and self-governance that Waqf institutions represent. All we seek is fairness, dialogue, and the preservation of our constitutional rights." Khan, a long-time social worker, is actively involved with several institutions including the Central Muslim Association (CMA) and Al-Ameen Education Society. His petition invokes violations of Articles 14, 15, 19, 21, 25, 26, 29, 30 and Article 300A of the Constitution. He has requested that his case be heard alongside other related matters already listed before the Supreme court on 16 April. *—Salar News*

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City dental student dies by suicide amid exam stress

BENGALURU, 14 APRIL

A 20-year-old dental student, Soumya, allegedly died by suicide on Sunday afternoon, reportedly due to exam-related stress. She jumped from floor of her apartment building, Victory Harmony Apartments in Hebbal, around 12.45pm, police said. Soumya was a second-year student at KLE Dental College, Yeshwanthpur, and lived with her family. Originally from Andhra Pradesh, her family had moved to City. No suicide note was found, police indicated she had been struggling with mental health issues linked to academic pressure. Help is available at Tele MANAS at 14416 or SAHAI at 080-25497777 *—Salar News*

PHOTO: ANI

Man kills dad over using phone in Mysuru

MYSURU, 14 APRIL

A 45-year-old man was allegedly killed by his son following a dispute over mobile phone usage in Shanthinagar late on Sunday. The deceased is Syed Matif. His son, Matin, 25, from Matif's second marriage, has been arrested by Udayagiri police. According to police, frequent arguments had taken place between the two over Matin's mobile gaming habits. On Sunday night, Matin invited his father to his house under the pretext of resolving the issue, but stabbed him with a sharp knife. *—Salar News*

MCC defends axing trees, says it was done as per law

MYSURU, 14 APRIL

A day after Mysuru city corporation (MCC) came under fire from greens for axing 40 roadside trees near Superintendent of Police Office, the local body on Monday stated that the trees were chopped to widen the road and that saplings will be planted along the stretch after the road work is completed. The MCC horticulture department claimed that it cut down the trees as it is required to take up the road widening works, as there is a demand to widen the road both from public and police owing to increasing traffic flow. Meanwhile, Mysuru royal family matriarch Pramoda Devi Wadiyar condemned the axing of the trees. This comes amidst criticism that development works are eroding the city's green cover. *—PTI*

Raghunath is new head of Brahmana Maha Sabha

KOLAR, 14 APRIL

Educationist S Raghunath has been elected President of the Akhila Karnataka Brahmana Maha Sabha (AKBMS), defeating renowned Purohit Bhanuprakash, who was backed by outgoing President Ashok Haranahalli. Raghunath, who narrowly lost the previous election, won this time with the support of former General Secretary Lakshmikanth, securing victory by over 2,000 votes. He vowed to unite the state's 45 lakh Brahmins under AKBMS, uplift community members working as cooks, archaks, and purohits, and ensure access to better education and facilities. Plans include creating a Rs 100 crore endowment, engaging with the government for welfare schemes, providing skill training, job opportunities, and establishing professional institutions to benefit the community both educationally and economically. *—Salar News*

Panic after Wadiyars claim 5K acres in Chamarajanagar

Pramoda clarified that villagers using land will not be affected

MYSURU, 14 APRIL

The Mysuru royal family on Monday said the 5,000 acres spread over nine villages surrounding Siddaiahanapura in Chamarajanagar district is its property, but the villagers residing there need not worry.

After approaching the Chamarajanagar district administration, royal family matriarch Pramoda Devi Wadiyar clarified that they will not disturb the villagers who are using the land.

Speaking to reporters at a press conference held at her residence at the Mysuru Royal Palace, Pramodevi said the documents available with them clearly states that the 5,113 acres of land is the royal family's property as per the agreement between the Maharaja of erstwhile Mysore and the Government of India in February 1951.

Pramoda Devi Wadiyar ***PHOTO: ANI***

She urged the villagers not to panic. "We don't know why the villagers are in fear. I am saying this now that they need not get scared now or even in future. I am giving them assurance that even if the Khatha comes in our name, they need not be afraid."

> **If farmers have records, gift deeds, let them meet Chamarajanagar DC. They can approach my office too. The Mysuru royal family will not reclaim its land if the Maharaja gifted the land to villagers** —Pramoda Devi Wadiyar

On 29 March, the State government had decided to declare Siddaiahanapura as a revenue village, prompting Pramodevi to write a letter to Chamarajanagar Deputy Commissioner Shilpa Nag and other senior members of the government stating that the land belonged to the royal family.

After she had written her letter, some farmers reportedly went to meet the Chamarajanagar DC, claiming that Jayachamaraja Wadiyar, the last reigning ruler of Maharaja, had gifted the land to the villagers. Pramodevi said had no information regarding this.

"If farmers have records, gift deeds, let them meet Chamarajanagar DC. They can approach my office too. The Mysuru royal family will not reclaim its land if the Maharaja gifted the land to villagers", Wadiyar added.

The royal family had written a similar letter to the Chamarajanagar district administration over the land in 2014 as well.

Her family had approached the High Court, other courts to protect its property. *—Salar News*

HM TO HOLD MEET

Migrant labourers under scanner amid increasing crimes

BENGALURU, 14 APRIL

Home Minister G Parameshwara on Monday said he would hold a joint meeting with Labour Minister Santosh Lad to address concerns over the involvement of migrant labourers in criminal activities.

While stating that migrant workforce cannot be stopped, Parameshwara stressed the need to monitor and manage crime involving labourers from other states, particularly in light of the recent kidnap and murder of a five-year-old girl in Hubballi by Ritesh Kumar, a 35-year-old from Patna, Bihar.

"Bengaluru and Karnataka are fast-developing, drawing workers from across the country. However, we are seeing increasing cases of their involvement in crimes. We must take this seriously," Parameshwara said.

Referring to the Hubballi case, he called it a "ghastly incident." The accused was shot dead in a police encounter when he allegedly attacked officers during evidence gathering. A senior official has been directed to conduct a detailed investigation.

Meanwhile, Parameshwara also confirmed the arrest of Santosh D, a 29-year-old driver from Tilaknagar, in connection with the molestation of a woman in Suddaguntepalya on April 3. The accused was tracked down in Kozhikode, Kerala, and is being brought to Bengaluru.

The 1.55am incident, captured on CCTV, went viral after the man |groped a college student walking with a friend.

He fled when the women raised an alarm. *—PTI*

Trains reportedly arrived every eight–10 minutes during peak hours, far below usual three–five minute interval, leading to dangerously overcrowded platforms at Majestic ***PHOTO: SALAR***

Metro train delays leave commuters stranded

BENGALURU, 14 APRIL

The Nadaprabhu Kempegowda (Majestic) Metro station turned into a bottleneck of human traffic on Monday morning, as reduced train frequency.

Bengaluru Metro Rail Corporation Limited (BMRCL) sparked commuter outrage—despite the day being a public holiday for Ambedkar Jayanti.

While government offices remained shut, thousands of office-goers and weekend returnees relied on the metro, only to find services crawling. Trains reportedly arrived every eight–10 minutes during peak hours, far below usual three–five minute interval, leading to dangerously overcrowded platforms at Majestic.

"I take the metro daily and left home at usual time, assuming things would run as normal," said Sourav R, commuter from Jalahalli. "But there were long queues, and I had to wait 15 minutes for the next train. I ended up late to work."

Social media erupted in criticism. "Majestic will have a stampede one of these days," warned commuter Krishna AG on X. Even City Central MP PC Mohan weighed in, slamming BMRCL's "unacceptable mismanagement" and urging the immediate restoration of normal services.

BMRCL scrambled to contain the damage and arranged additional trains. "We operationalised four additional trains from Baiyappanahalli to Majestic," said Chief PRO Yashwanth Chavan. *—Salar News*

CM to inaugurate ₹ 2K cr projects in Bidar on 16 April

BIDAR, 14 APRIL

Chief Minister Siddaramaiah will lay the foundation stone for development projects worth Rs 2,025 crore in Bidar on Wednesday, said Minister Eshwar Khandre.

He will also address a mega rally at Nehru Stadium, expected to draw over 50,000 attendees

He will inaugurate and lay foundations for multiple initiatives, including reviving the Bidar–Bengaluru civil aviation service, supported by Rs 14 crore from Kalyana Karnataka Region Development Board.

Though services begin 15 April, a symbolic inauguration will occur on 17 April .

Key inaugurations include 220 kV substations in Nagur and Santpur (Rs 114 crore), works under Bidar and Bhalki municipalities (Rs 49 crore), 400 houses by the Slum Clearance Board (Rs 23 crore), and a cardiac care unit and cath lab at BRIMS (Rs 15.11 crore).

Foundation stones will be laid for the Rs 582-crore Mehkar Lift Irrigation Project, multi-village water projects (Rs 330 crore), park rejuvenation (Rs 100 crore), drainage upgrades (Rs 80 crore), and a bridge-cum-barrage in Aurad taluk (Rs 70 crore). *—Salar News*

In a record, BBMP collects Rs 4,930 crore in property tax

BENGALURU 14 APRIL

The Bruhat Bengaluru Mahanagara Palike (BBMP) collected Rs 4,930.36 crore in property tax for the financial year 2024–25.This marks a sharp increase of over Rs 1,000 crore from Rs 3,918 crore collected in 2023–24. Notably, this surge was achieved without raising tax rates.

BBMP Special Commissioner (Revenue) Munish Moudgil credited the success to a systematic IT-based strategy, robust arrear recovery, and on-ground enforcement. "We introduced SOPs and recovery rules, and our teams conducted door-to-door follow-ups," he told Salar News on Monday.

BBMP is now targeting Rs 6,000 crore in collections for FY 2025–26.

Among zones, Yelahanka led with Rs 464.66 crore against a target of Rs 445.24 crore (104.36 per cent). Mahadevapura closely followed, collecting Rs.1,310.58 crore (100.12 per cent). Overall, BBMP achieved 94.62 per cent of its Rs.5,210.47 crore target for FY 2024–25. *—Salar News*

Zone wise tax collection from 1 April, 2024, to 31 March, 2025

Sl No.	Zone	Total collection (in Rs crore)
1	Mahadevapura	₹1,310.58
2	East	₹834.14
3	South	₹733.65
4	West	₹562.61
5	Bommanahalli	₹490.03
6	Yelahanka	₹464.66
7	Rajarajeshwari Nagar	₹381.75
8	Dasarahalli	₹152.94
	GRAND TOTAL	₹4,930.36

Congress imposing Sharia law in State, says Ashoka

BENGALURU, 14 APRIL

In a fiery attack on Congress government, Opposition Leader R Ashoka likened ruling party's tax policies in State to "terrorist assaults" in Jammu and Kashmir (J&K).

He accused it of enforcing "Sharia law" under the guise of governance.

On Monday, BJP leader said, "Just as terrorists strike in J&K, the Congress is launching a tax assault on the people of State." He claimed the recent fees imposed on garbage collection and parking in City reflect a "Tughlaq-style administration," where the government is both deaf and indifferent to public suffering.

Ashoka criticised Chief Minister Siddaramaiah for being "absent in governance" and accused Deputy CM DK Shivakumar of playing a "double game"—appearing devout with temple rituals while allegedly "appeasing one community."

He said the BJP's ongoing campaign against the Congress's price hike policies has already forced political retreats, citing ministerial resignations and land return orders in the MUDA scam as results of their struggle.

On the Waqf Amendment Act, Ashoka claimed that "nobody can bring in Waqf laws just because someone demands it." He argued that earlier amendments during the UPA regime led to land misuse, and that "the Constitution has been changed 50 times by Congress; the BJP needs no lectures." *—Salar News*

Driver electrocuted while reversing vehicle in City

BENGALURU, 14 APRIL

A 45-year-old truck driver died after coming into contact with a live electric wire while reversing his vehicle near an under-construction apartment complex in Kengeri late on Sunday night.

The deceased Chhotka, is a native of North India. According to police, the incident occurred around 9 pm near Shirke Apartments in Kengeri Satellite Town, where construction materials like bricks and jelly stones were being delivered at a vacant plot.

While attempting to reverse the truck after unloading, the driver reportedly lost control of the vehicle, causing it to come into contact with an overhead electric cable. Chhotka was electrocuted on the spot. Police from the Kengeri Traffic Station said a case has been registered and further investigations are under way.

Authorities are probing whether the electric cable was at standard height or loose. "We are checking the CCTV in the area and the exact cause will be determined after a detailed forensic and electrical safety assessment," an officer said. Initial findings suggest that the truck was moving at a slow speed, which is likely why the electric cable did not snap but still made contact with the vehicle, resulting in the fatal electrocution. *—Salar News*

GIRLFRIEND AIDED BTM LAYOUT MOLESTER TO FLEE

BENGALURU, 14 APRIL

The man accused of molesting a woman in BTM layout evaded police with the help of his girlfriend, a Home Guard, police said on Monday.

The accused, Santosh Daniel, a native of Tamil Nadu and resident of Gulbarga Colony in Tilak Nagar, was arrested by Bengaluru police on Sunday. He had been on the run since 3 April, after allegedly groping a female student returning from a nearby tea stall around 2 am. The act was captured on CCTV, triggering a police search.

Police discovered that Daniel fled to Tamil Nadu first, then to Kerala, where he stayed with a relative, claiming to be job hunting. His girlfriend, a Home Guard, accompanied him and allegedly helped him remain hidden. *—Salar News*

Veteran Kannada actor 'Bank' Janardhan no more

BENGALURU, 14 APRIL

Senior Kannada comedy actor 'Bank' Janardhan passed away at a private hospital here during the early hours on Monday, his family sources said.

The 76-year-old actor died at around 2.30 AM, they said.

Janardhan, who is basically from Holalkere in Chitradurga district, is survived by a son and three daughters.

According to his son Guru, he has not been keeping well for the last twenty days and was hospitalised. He had recovered in between and had come home, but had to be hospitalised again on Friday as he complained of breathing issues.

He was undergoing treatment in ICU under oxygen support, but things complicated with serious breathing issues last night and developed kidney failure, and died at around 2.30 AM. "We expected him to recover, but we lost him...." Janardhan has acted in a number of television serials and over 500 films.

'Bank' Janardhan ***PHOTO: X***

It is said that earlier he continued to work in a bank while acting, and people began calling him 'Bank' Janardhan and the name stuck to him. Some of notable films of Janardhan as an actor include 'News' (2005), 'Shhh' (1993),' Tharle Nan Maga' (1992), 'Ganesha Subramanya' (1992), among others. *—PTI*

MACHETE WIELDING MAN APPROACHES YATNAL ON STAGE

RAICHUR, 14 APRIL

A man carrying a machete was arrested after he climbed onto the stage where expelled BJP MLA Basanagouda Patil Yatnal was speaking on Sunday, police said. Suspect, Srinivas Pujar, 46, who works as an electrician with Hatti Gold Mines Company in Raichur was sozzled Sunday night.

He however did not make any attempt to hurt anyone, police officials said.

Yatnal was recently booked for his alleged derogatory remark against a religious figure and a call was given for a mega protest against remark in Vijayapura. He said police were aware of the threat to Yatnal and conducted a thorough investigation into this incident. *—PTI*

PARENTS PANIC

Wedding invite ends in kidnap scare

BIDAR, 14 APRIL

A man distributing wedding invitations was mistakenly suspected of attempted child abduction in Vidyanagar, Bidar, triggering panic among locals on Sunday. The confusion arose after he asked local children for directions, prompting their parents to lodge a police complaint.

Around 6pm, the man was seen talking with children outside a house, raising suspicion. The children, reportedly alarmed by his behaviour, informed their parents. As the adults confronted him, the man fled. CCTV footage supported the complaint, leading to swift action by Gandhi Gunj Police.

Given the case in Hubballi, where a five-year-old was kidnapped and murdered, Bidar police treated the case with urgency. However, investigations revealed an unexpected truth.

The man was asking children for an address ***PHOTO: SCREENSHOT***

Superintendent of Police Pradeep Gunti clarified that the individual was Mallikarjun, a resident of Aurad Sirsi village in Bidar taluk.

He had travelled to Vidyanagar to distribute invitations for his sister's wedding scheduled for 23 April.

Alarmed by the sudden reaction from adults, he panicked and fled the scene.

After being located and questioned, Mallikarjun explained the misunderstanding. Police confirmed that no child abduction or inappropriate behaviour occurred. *—Salar News*

T'gana to bring in Act for gig, platform workers

HYDERABAD, 14 APRIL

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy on Monday directed officials to seek public opinion on the Telangana Gig and Platform Workers Bill and finalize it after taking suggestions, recommendations and objections. Reddy held a special meeting with gig workers, union representatives and senior officials of various departments, during which the officials were directed to make necessary arrangements to enact the draft Bill on 1 May. The bill featured amongst the Congress' major poll promises during the 2023 Assembly polls. The State Labour Department has prepared the draft of the bill that guarantees job and social security, insurance facilities and other rights to the Gig and platform workers. Reddy suggested several changes and additions in the draft bill. He asked officials to prepare the final draft by 25 April. Nearly four lakh people are working on food delivery apps, as cab drivers and package deliveries across the state, the CM said asserting that suggestions and objections should be accepted from all sections. *—PTI*

Four in UP booked for casteist slurs against Ambedkar

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

Police in Hapur have booked four individuals for allegedly making objectionable gestures and comments towards a hoarding and statue of Dr BR Ambedkar on the eve of his birth anniversary, triggering outrage among members of the Dalit community, officials said Monday.

According to police, the incident occurred around 10pm on Saturday and was caught on camera. In the footage, four people are seen riding two separate scooters making offensive gestures towards a hoarding and statue of Ambedkar and using derogatory language against members of the Scheduled Castes, police said. *—PTI*

Edu ministry gets SC notice for fair NAAC rating

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

The Supreme Court sought response from the Union education ministry and others on a plea seeking measures to ensure fair and transparent grading by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) of higher education institutions. A bench of Justices PS Narasimha and Joymalya Bagchi issued notice to the ministry, the University Grants Commission and the NAAC on a plea filed by NGO Bistro Destino Foundation. The NAAC grades colleges and universities on parameters such as curriculum, faculty, infrastructure, research and financial well-being. "We wish to go deep into the matter and know how NAAC is functioning," the bench said in its 9 April order. *—PTI*

PHOTO: PTI

Kerala minister flays Hindi titles in NCERT textbooks

T'PURAM, 14 APRIL

Kerala General Education Minister V Sivankutty on Monday opposed the reported decision of the National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) to use Hindi titles for English-medium textbooks, describing it as a serious irrationality and a cultural imposition that undermines India's linguistic diversity. He argued that replacing long-standing English titles, which foster sensitivity and understanding among students, with Hindi titles such as Mridangam and Santoor is inappropriate. This change, he said, contradicts Kerala's commitment to preserving linguistic diversity and regional autonomy. *—PTI*

Vijay, CPI and YSRCP challenge Waqf in SC

3 judge bench to hear all petitions tomorrow

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

TVK leader Vijay, YSRCP led by former Andhra chief minister Jagan Mohan Reddy and the CPI have challenge the Act in separate pleas **PHOTO: PTI**

Actor-turned-politician and Tamilaga Vettri Kazhagam president Vijay has challenged in the Supreme Court the constitutional validity of the Waqf legislation.

In seperate petitions, the YSRCP-led by former Andhra Pradesh chief minister Jagan Mohan Reddy and the CPI also challenged the Act.

A bench headed by Chief Justice of India (CJI) Sanjiv Khanna will hear on 16 April more than a dozen petitions, including one filed by All India Majlis-e-Ittehadul Muslimeen (AIMIM) leader Asaduddin Owaisi, challenging the constitutional validity of the Waqf (Amendment) Act, 2025.

Besides the CJI, Justice Sanjay Kumar and Justice KV Viswanathan are part of the three-judge bench, according to the apex court website.

In addition to Owaisi's plea, the top court has listed for hearing petitions filed by AAP MLA Amanatullah Khan, Association for the Protection of Civil Rights, Arshad Madani, Samastha Kerala Jamiathul Ulema, Anjum Kadari, Taiyyab Khan Salmani, Mohd Shafi, Mohd Fazlurrahim and RJD leader Manoj Jha. A few other petitions are yet to be listed before the bench by the apex court registry.

On 8 April, the Centre filed a caveat in the apex court and sought a hearing before any order was passed in the matter.

The CPI meanwhile filed a writ petition through its general secretary D Raja, in which it contended that the Bill "vests unchecked authority in the Central government over the administration of the Waqf Board".

The YSRCP's plea filed through lawyer Mahfooz Ahsan Nazki, the YSRCP cited "serious constitutional violations" and "failure to address the concerns of the Muslim community".

By contrast, the Rajasthan government sought to be an impeading party in the pleas against the Waqf. In its plea, the state's BJP government claimed "The law is not only constitutionally sound and non-discriminatory, but it is also rooted in the values of transparency, fairness, and accountability". *—PTI*

Murshidabad calm after 210 arrested

Suvendu says President Rule must for next polls

KOLKATA, 14 APRIL

Security forces in violence-hit Malda and Murshidabad districts of West Bengal **PHOTO: PTI**

Police have so far arrested 210 people and the situation in violence-hit West Bengal's Murshidabad is gradually returning to normal, a senior police officer said on Monday.

Jawed Shamim, Additional Director General (Law and Order), said efforts to restore peace and stability in the affected areas are underway.

"Shops have started to open and people are returning. So far, 19 families have returned to their homes. Both Malda and Murshidabad district administrations are working closely to ensure the safe return of those who had fled," he said.

He stressed the importance of stopping the misinformation to prevent unrest.

"So far, 210 arrests have been made. I urge people not to believe rumours and to verify information. Rumourmongering must stop if we are to maintain peace," he said.

Three people were killed and several others injured in the violence that erupted in Suti, Dhulian, Samserganj and Jangipur areas of Murshidabad since Friday.

Referring to the brutal killing of a father and son, Shamim said a separate case would be filed and all persons involved — both perpetrators and bystanders — would be held accountable.

"It will take time to identify them precisely, but no one will be spared," he asserted.

"The first priority of police is to restore complete normalcy in Murshidabad, and we are confident that it will be achieved soon," Shamim said.

Meannwhile, senior BJP leader Suvendu Adhikari demanded that the 2026 West Bengal Assembly elections be conducted under President's rule, alleging a complete breakdown of law and order.

Adhikari the unrest highlighted the state government's inability to protect citizens and maintain peace. "Wherever Hindus are in the minority, they are stopped from voting. Police act like cadres of the ruling party. For free and fair elections, the Assembly polls must be held under President's rule," Adhikari, the Leader of the Opposition in the Assembly, said. *—PTI*

Cong should appoint Muslim chief: Modi

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi **PHOTO: PTI**

If the Congress really has sympathy for Muslims, it should appoint a Muslim as its president and give Muslims 50 percent tickets, Prime Minister Narendra Modi said Monday.

Addressing a gathering after laying the foundation stone of a new terminal building AT Hisar's Maharaja Agrasen Airport and flagging off a commercial flight to Ayodhya, Modi laid into the Congress.

"To win elections the Congress made amendments in the Waqf law in 2013," Modi said. Modi said the changes effected by the Congress were "the biggest insult to Babasaheb" as they violated the Constitution.

He also said Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar advocated for no reservation on the basis of religion, but the Congress government in Karnataka gave reservation in tenders on the basis of religion, "snatching away" the rights of the SCs, Scheduled Tribes and the OBC.

The birth anniversary of Ambedkar was marked by a bitter spat between the ruling BJP and the opposition.

Modi accused the Congress of turning the deprived sections of society into second-class citizens and asserted that his government was being guided by Ambedkar's vision.

During the Congress' years-long rule, water reached the swimming pools of party leaders but tapwater did not reach villages, Modi claimed. "Even 70 years after Independence, only 16 per cent of homes in villages had tapwater. SCs, STs and OBCs were most effected by this."

Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge on the other hand that the Modi government paid mere lip service to him and reiterated the demand for a caste survey to push social justice. Kharge charge, "Modi calls himself a leader of the backward classes, but when atrocities are committed against backward class people, he does not utter a word on it". *—PTI*

> **If they (the Congress) really have some sympathy for Muslims, they should appoint their president from the Muslim community. Why do not they do it?**
>
> -Narendra Modi, Prime Minister

> **The Modi government takes the name of Ambedkar but is not ready to fulfil his aspirations and wishes. They only pay lip service**
>
> -Mallikarjun Kharge, Congress President

> **When will the RSS appoint a Dalit, Muslim, or a woman as its sarsanghchalak (chief)?**
>
> -Harshvardhan Sapkal, Maharashtra Congress chief

Tejashwi: Take note of Saini's Bihar statement

PATNA, 14 APRIL

RJD leader Tejashwi Yadav on Monday asked Bihar Chief Minister Nitish Kumar's JD(U) to "take serious note" of a remark by Haryana counterpart Naib Singh Saini, allegedly indicating that BJP will not let him enjoy another term in office.

During a function in Delhi on 12 April, Saini had remarked that the victory march that saw the BJP return to power in Haryana must continue in Bihar. The party would win the upcoming elections under Bihar's Deputy Chief Minister Samrat Choudhary's leadership.

Yadav said, "The JD(U) must take serious note of the comment. Saini is a member of the BJP national executive. He appears to have revealed what the party's top leadership has decided, but is not making public".

"It is now clear that the BJP is unwilling to let Nitish continue as CM. Already he seems to be powerless. His persona is being used as a mask and the JD(U) is being run by people, who have sold themselves to the BJP," he said.

However, JD(U) deplored the attempts to drive a wedge between coalition partners by distorted interpretations.

Choudhary on Monday lambasted Yadav for his comments, asserting that NDA will form the next Bihar government under Kumar's leadership. *—PTI*

Rana identified New Delhi for terror attack

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

The Delhi court has found sufficient evidence indicating that Tahawwur Hussain Rana a key figure behind the 2008 Mumbai terror attacks had identified New Delhi as a potential target for terror attacks similar to those in Mumbai, signalling a conspiracy that extends beyond India's borders.

Special NIA judge Chander Jit Singh stated that the case pertains to national security, necessitating sustained custodial interrogation of Rana to investigate the conspiracy thoroughly.

The judge noted the need to confront Rana with witnesses, forensic evidence, and documentary records from the investigation, which aims to address the extensive terror network involved.

Interrogation sessions are reportedly lasting eight to ten hours daily, with the NIA ensuring Rana receives medical check-ups and access to legal counsel as required by the court's orders.

To piece together crucial evidence and retrace the events from 17 years ago, officials might transport Rana to key locations, allowing them to reconstruct the crime scene and gain insight into the terror network at play *—PTI*

T'gana becomes 1st state to enact SC categorisation

HYDERABAD, 14 APRIL

The Telangana government has officially begun the implementation of Scheduled Castes (SC) categorisation, becoming the first state in India to do so, as announced by Irrigation Minister N Uttam Kumar Reddy. This landmark decision follows the recommendations of a commission led by retired High Court Judge Justice Shameem Akther, which advised that the 59 SC communities be divided into three groups to allocate a total of 15 per cent reservation in government jobs and educational institutions.

The newly issued Government Order coincides with the birth anniversary of BR Ambedkar, the architect of the Constitution. Under the new system, Group-I, consisting of 15 socially, economically, and educationally disadvantaged communities, will receive 1 per cent reservation; Group-II, with 18 moderately advantaged communities, will have 9 per cent; and Group-III, includ 26 relatively better-off communities, will benefit from a 5 per cent reservation.

"Telangana is the first state to implement the sub-categorisation after the Supreme Court's verdicts," Reddy said adding that job vacancies in the state government now will be filled accordingly.

The Scheduled Castes (Rationalisation of Reservation) Bill, 2025 was passed last month by the Supreme Court. *—PTI*

Telangana Chief Minister A Revanth Reddy pays tribute to BR Ambedkar on his birth anniversary at Hyderabad **PHOTO: PTI**

EXTRADITION SOON?

ED's plea to declare Choksi economic offender stuck in court for 7 years

MUMBAI, 14 APRIL

Mehul Choksi **PHOTO: PTI**

The ED's plea to declare absconding diamantaire Mehul Choksi has been pending before a court in Mumbai for nearly seven years.

Choksi, 65, and his nephew diamantaire Nirav Modi are the prime accused in the Rs 13,000 crore PNB bank loan fraud case. Choksi was arrested in Belgium following an extradition request by Indian probe agencies, official sources said on Monday.

The Enforcement Directorate had filed the application in July 2018, seeking to declare Choksi an FEO and confiscate his assets under provisions of the Fugitive Economic Offenders Act.

However, the matter has witnessed repeated delays owing to a barrage of applications filed by the accused in the PMLA court and the Bombay High Court alleging procedural lapses in the Enforcement Directorate's plea.

He had urged the court to take note of the repeated filing of similar applications and to not entertain them.

Choksi's lawyer had informed the court that the accused was undergoing treatment for suspected cancer in Belgium and intended to file an application in connection with his health.

Choksi had challenged the ED's application in the Bombay High Court, alleging that the agency "had not followed proper procedure before filing the application".

Choksi claimed he was honey trapped while abroad..

However, in September 2023, the High Court dismissed his plea, ruling that the ED had adhered to the prescribed format under the FEO Act.

Despite this, the hearing on declaring Choksi FEO could not commence, with Choksi continuing to file applications before the special court through his lawyers.

While most of these pleas have been dismissed, a few remain pending.

His latest attempt to stall proceedings through a plea to recall the notice issued on the ED's FEO application was rejected in December 2023.

Choksi's counsel has argued that the ED kept shifting its stance on the material grounds for declaring him an FEO and that the suspension of his Indian passport made it impossible for him to return for investigation.

Under the FEO Act, an individual can be declared a Fugitive Economic Offender if a warrant has been issued against him for an offence involving Rs 100 crore or more and he has left India. Once declared an FEO, the person's property can be confiscated by the investigating agency. *—PTI*

Desi financial scammers on the run

With the possible extradition of Mehul Choksi, here are other wanted financial embezzlers

1. Nirav Modi: Mehul Choksi's nephew and co-accused in the Rs 14,000 crore PNB scam case. The diamantaire left the country just days before news of the country's largest economic scam broke.

2. Vijay Mallya: Liquor baron and former Rajya Sabha member absconded in 2016 to the UK while facing a loan default case of Rs 9,000 crore.

3. Lalit Modi: The IPL architect fled the country shortly after the government probed his Rs 125 crore scam. He sought asylum in the UK. Recently, his application for a Vanuatu passport was denied.

4. Sanjay Bhandari: The arms dealer fled to the UK in 2016 after being accused of tax evasion and money laundering. Recently, the UK refused to change its stance on his extradition.

5. Gauri Bhanu and Hiren Bhanu: The couple in charge of the New India Cooperative Bank are wanted in a Rs 123 crore embezzlement scheme. Their whereabouts currently are unknown.

PHOTO: X

NY plane crash killed Punjab-born surgeon, family

NEW YORK, 14 APRIL

A Punjab-born surgeon, Joy Saini, and five of her family members were killed in the plane crash in New York on Sunday. The plane was being piloted by her husband, Michael Groff who also perished in the crash. The plane was en route from Westchester County Airport in White Plains to Columbia County Airport when it crashed just 10 miles short of its destination. Also among the dead were the couple's children Karenna and Jared Goff, Jared's partner Alexia Couyutas Duarte and Karenna's boyfriend James Santoro. Their third child, Anika, was not on the flight. Moments before the crash, Michael Groff had contacted Columbia County Airport's control tower, reporting a missed approach and requesting permission to try landing again. —*Agencies*

Wasps sting 25 of a family in HP; five in critical state

HAMIRPUR, 14 APRIL

In a distressing turn of events, 25 family members celebrating a wedding in Rakkad village were injured in a wasp attack on Monday morning. The incident occurred at Guga temple during a ritual prayer by the groom, Naveen Singh, and his relatives. After offering prayers, they were suddenly swarmed by wasps, causing panic and leading to numerous stings among the attendees. The injured were rushed to Nadaun Hospital for treatment, with health officials reporting that five individuals are in critical condition, while several others, including the groom, sustained serious injuries. The joyous occasion has been overshadowed by this incident, prompting a temporary halt to the wedding celebrations. —*PTI*

Ex-army man caught 20 yrs after jumping parole

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

A former Army personnel, who had been on the run for over 20 years after absconding from parole while serving a life sentence for his wife's murder, has been apprehended in his native village in Madhya Pradesh. Anil Kumar Tiwari, 58, was convicted in 1989 of the killing of his wife. He was sentenced to life imprisonment. In November 2005, Tiwari was granted a two-week parole by the Delhi High Court but he absconded, evading law enforcement for more than two decades. The Delhi Police's Crime Branch managed to apprehend him on 12 April. During the interrogation, Tiwari disclosed that he managed to evade capture by avoiding mobile phones, conducting transactions in cash and frequently changing jobs and residences. He also revealed that he had remarried and fathered four children in his time away. —*PTI*

CPO aspirants in Kerala protest with blood on placards

T'PURAM, 14 APRIL

On the 13th day of their protest, women Civil Police Officer (CPO) rank holders demonstrated outside the Secretariat, marking Vishu day with placards inscribed in their own blood. Dressed in black, the demonstrators highlighted the imminent expiry of the rank list on 19 April, stressing urgent need for government action. The protestors said only a small fraction of those on the 2022 rank list – merely 30 per cent of the 967 candidates received recommendation letters from the Public Service Commission for appointments. With personal hardships overcome, including studying during pregnancy, the women continue to demand the fulfilment of the government's commitment to enhance women's representation in the police force. —*PTI*

Bengal teachers who lost jobs head to Delhi to protest

WB working to identify 'tainted and untainted' teachers

KOLKATA, 14 APRIL

The West Bengal School Service Commission (WBSSC) sent a list of 'tainted' and 'untainted' candidates to the state education department for cross-verification, a senior official said on Monday.

The move comes as a section of teachers began their journey to Delhi to hold sit-in protest at Jantar Mantar on 16 April.

The list, dispatched on 13 April, reportedly segregates candidates affected by the Supreme Court's 3 April order, which invalidated the appointments of around 26,000 teaching and non-teaching staff due to large-scale irregularities in the 2016 recruitment process.

According to the official, the list categorises tainted candidates as those with discrepancies in their OMR sheets or those who allegedly secured jobs by jumping ranks through fraudulent means. It also includes details of 'untainted' or deserving candidates who qualified purely on merit.

Teachers stage a protest at Salt Lake in Kolkata against the Supreme Court's order on SSC Teacher Recruitment **PHOTO: ANI**

"The list is currently being cross-verified," the official said.

Education Minister Bratya Basu had earlier announced that the list would be made public on the WBSSC website by 21 April, following legal consultation.

Mehboob Mondal, one of the spokespersons for the 'Deserving Teachers' Rights Forum,' said around 70 affected teachers left from Kolkata's Esplanade area in two buses.

"Our protest is against the sacking of eligible teachers who had cleared the 2016 SSC recruitment test purely on merit. Despite this, we've been unfairly clubbed with those involved in corruption. What are we supposed to do now?" Mondal told PTI.

"We want to present our side before the people in the national capital. Several prominent persons have expressed support and plan to visit us during the sit-in," he said.

Mondal confirmed that all those traveling to Delhi would participate in the three-hour protest at Jantar Mantar and said that necessary permissions from Delhi authorities had been obtained.

Meanwhile, the ongoing sit-in by 'eligible' teachers at the Y-Channel near Esplanade in Kolkata will continue.

The Supreme Court order on 3 April invalidated the appointments of 26,000 teaching and non-teaching staff in state-sponsored and aided schools after finding large-scale irregularities in the 2016 recruitment by the School Service Commission (SSC). —*PTI*

DEPRESSED AFTER CRIME

Kalyan rape-murder accused's suicide note found in diary

THANE, 14 APRIL

Authorities have found a diary in the Taloja prison cell of Vishal Gawli, accused of raping and murdering a minor girl, wherein he purportedly mentioned he was depressed and did not blame anyone for his suicide, officials said on Monday.

Gawli, 35, was accused of committing the crime in Kalyan town of Maharashtra's Thane district in December last year. He was found hanging in a toilet at the Taloja Central Jail in neighbouring Navi Mumbai early on Sunday, police earlier said.

Authorities have found a diary in Gawli's cell in which he purportedly wrote that he was depressed as his wife, a co-accused in the case was avoiding him and did not believe him, an official from Kharghar police station said.

The victim's parents demand death penalty for Gawli.

The 12-year-old girl went missing from Kolsewadi on 24 December, and her body was found later at Bapgaon village in Padgha under Thane Rural police jurisdiction.

Gawli's lawyer Sanjay Dhakane, however, on Sunday said he and the deceased's kin suspect foul play in his death.

The Kolsewadi police later arrested Gawli and his wife Sakshi on charges of kidnapping for ransom, rape, murder, causing disappearance of evidence and other offences under the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act. The police filed a 948-page chargesheet against the couple in February this year. —*PTI*

SEASON OF FESTIVITIES

From Left: Devotees take a holy dip in the Ganga on the occasion of Satuani festival, which worships the Mother Nature, in Patna on Monday; Women take part in a cultural procession on the occasion of Bihu, the harvest festival and Assamese New Year, in Guwahati on Monday; People bathe their cows and buffaloes on the first day of Rongali Bihu celebrations at Puranigudam in Nagaon district of Assam on Monday **PHOTO: PTI**

Nagpur blast: 3 booked for safety lapses

NAGPUR, 14 APRIL

Safety lapses have been found to have caused the blast at an aluminium manufacturing factory in Nagpur last week, which claimed five lives. A case has been registered against three officials.

The blast occurred on 11 April at MMP Aluminium Industries in Umred MIDC in Maharashtra's Nagpur district.

The deceased, aged between 20 to 25 years, hailed from the district.

Two other workers with 80 per cent burn injuries were reported to be in a critical condition. They were shifted from a government hospital to a private one for advance treatment.

The blast occurred on 11 April at MMP Aluminium Industries in Umred MIDC in Maharashtra's Nagpur district **PHOTO: PTI**

According to a report from the Directorate of Industrial Safety and Health (DISH), the factory management failed to provide the personal protective equipment to workers and put their lives at risk, police officials said.

Workers were also allowed on the site without safety training.

The police said they have registered a case against two managers and a safety in-charge of the company under sections 106(1) (causing death by negligence), 287 (negligent conduct regarding fire or combustible matter) and 125(B) (endangering life or personal safety of others due to negligence or recklessness) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita.

No arrest has been made so far, though investigations are underway. —*PTI*

WhatsApp msg threatens to blow up Salman's car

MUMBAI, 14 APRIL

The Mumbai traffic police got a message threatening actor Salman Khan, officials said on Monday. In the message, received on the traffic police's WhatsApp helpline on Sunday, the sender threatened to blow up the actor's car and enter his residence and thrash him, a police official said.

An official posted at the traffic police control room alerted seniors about the message, based on which Worli police registered a case against the unidentified person under section 351(2) (3) (criminal intimidation) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, he said, adding that an investigation has been started into the case.

The traffic police helpline received many threat messages targeting the 59-year-old actor in the recent past. Khan had earlier received death threats from the Lawrence Bishnoi gang. —*PTI*

Audit flays M'rashtra for sanitation worker deaths

MUMBAI, 14 APRIL

A recent social audit commissioned by the Centre has unveiled significant failures in the safety measures provided to sanitation workers in Maharashtra, highlighting the tragic deaths of 18 workers between 2021 and 2024.

The Social Audit Report On The Death Of Sanitary Workers 2021–24 was filed by the Maharashtra State Society for Social Audit and Transparency after checks in five locations, including Mumbai, Pune and Parbhani.

The audit found critical deficiencies in legal protections. The workers were often not registered, depriving them of welfare schemes. They were also reportedly made to clean sewers and septic tanks without basic safety gear or training, violating the Prohibition of Employment as Manual Scavengers and Their Rehabilitation Act 2013. —*PTI*

Coast Guard, ATS seize ₹1,800 cr drugs off Gujarat

AHMEDABAD, 14 APRIL

On Tuesday, the Indian Coast Guard seized 300 kg of narcotics worth Rs 1,800 crore in a joint operation with the Anti-Terrorism Squad (ATS) off the International Maritime Boundary Line (IMBL).

"Indian Coast Guard, in a joint operation with Gujarat ATS on the night of 12–13 April, seized 300kg narcotics worth Rs 1,800 Cr off IMBL near the Gujarat coast. On spotting the ICG ship, smugglers dumped contraband & fled across IMBL. The consignment was recovered at sea and handed to ATS for further investigation," a post by the ICG said.

The Deputy Inspector General of Gujarat ATS, Sunil Joshi, mentioned that two ATS officials had been attached with the Coast Guard while the ship went to the suspected place of the handoff. —*ANI*

Members of the Indian Coast Guard and Gujarat Anti-Terrorism Squad along with the drugs seized on Saturday night **PHOTO: X/ dgpgujarat**

FREE AND FAIR POLLS

Ambedkar's call led to one EC for entire India

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

Bhimrao Ramji Ambedkar, considered the key architect of the Indian Constitution, is also credited with the creation of the Election Commission.

An amendment brought by him in the Constituent Assembly led to the establishment of the Election Commission, an independent body mandated to hold elections to the offices of President and Vice President, Lok Sabha, Rajya Sabha, state assembies and state legislative councils.

Certain provisions of the Constitution, including the one related to the EC, came into force immediately after it was adopted by the Constituent Assembly on 26 November, 1949. The rest of the provisions came into force on 26 January, 1950. The EC came into being on 25 January, 1950, a day before India became a Republic.

Before Ambedkar brought the amendment, draft Article 289 proposed separate election commissions for the Centre and the states **PHOTO: PTI**

Before Ambedkar brought the amendment, draft Article 289 proposed separate election commissions for the Centre and the states, scholarly articles and Constituent Assembly debates suggest. But Ambedkar proposed a more centralised body to be headed by a chief election commissioner to be appointed by the President.

Draft Article 289 proposed one commission to hold elections to the central legislature, both the Upper and Lower Houses (which later came to be known as Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha). It also proposed separate commissions for each state or province. These commissions were to be appointed by respective state governors.

The new Article 324 proposed by Ambedkar before the Constituent Assembly made the poll machinery centralised by having a singular poll authority for holding state and national elections.

Regional commissioners were proposed to help the EC function across India. —*PTI*

Tension eases in Hazaribag after stone-pelting incident

HAZARIBAG, 14 APRIL

- Barhi Subdivisional Police Officer Ajit Kumar Bimal said police are in the process of identifying those involved, and an FIR has been filed regarding the incident

Calm has been restored in Hazaribag district, Jharkhand, following unrest in Jhurjhuri village attributed to an alleged stone-pelting incident during a religious procession. Tension escalated on Sunday evening but was brought under control within hours, said Barhi Subdivisional Police Officer (SDPO) Ajit Kumar Bimal.

The incident occurred around 8pm when stones were reportedly thrown at the procession. In its aftermath, security measures were intensified in the area. Bimal confirmed that despite the disturbances, all shops, markets, and business establishments have resumed normal operations, with traffic returning to usual flow.

The organising group of the procession claimed several women sustained injuries during the attack, leading participants to block a segment of the GT Road in protest. Bimal mentioned that the police are in the process of identifying those involved, and a First Information Report (FIR) has been filed regarding the incident. "The situation is now completely under control," asserted the SDPO, as authorities continue to monitor developments within the community. —*PTI*

LACK OF AMENITIES

A child was seen holding his father's drip bottle while standing at the edge of a hospital bed in Tikamgarh District Hospital, Madhya Pradesh. A video went viral on social media, receiving backlash from the public on the shortage of medical resources. This incident also raised concern about the situation of the hospitals in the state
PHOTO: SCREENGRAB

Ambedkar's legacy seeing a resurgence today

Dr BR Ambedkar was a revolutionary thinker whose blueprint for an egalitarian, caste-free India remains deeply relevant to the nation's contemporary socio-political discourse ***PHOTO: WIKICOMMONS***

As India commemorates the 135th birth anniversary of Dr BR Ambedkar, his ideas today are not merely confined to history books or ceremonial tributes, but they continue to shape the vocabulary of resistance — echoing in courtrooms, classrooms, protests, and digital spaces — where debates on caste, equality, and democracy are far from settled.

Widely revered as the principal architect of the Indian Constitution, Ambedkar, whose birth anniversary is being marked across the country, was more than a jurist.

He was a revolutionary thinker whose blueprint for an egalitarian, caste-free India remains deeply relevant to the nation's contemporary socio-political discourse.

Dalit rights activist Dr Suraj Yengde said Ambedkar's image is often used for political gain, but without acknowledging his strong criticism of the caste system.

"Ambedkar's image is used to silence Dalit rage around any issue, to the benefit of the oppressor, who is more than happy to co-opt Ambedkar into their vicious programme of hatred and violence," Yengde wrote in his book Caste Matters.

He pointed out how leaders turned to the Constitution during the 2024 general elections as a symbol of defiance.

"They found it a more appealing idea to attract the common mass towards Samvidhaan, as opposed to other traditional issues at hand, such as social justice, welfare programmes, education, health, taxation and the protection of the working class," he said.

Born in 1891 in Mhow, Madhya Pradesh, Ambedkar belonged to a Dalit family and battled systemic exclusion from an early age. However, his relentless pursuit of education, including doctorates from Columbia University and the London School of Economics, transformed him into one of India's most formidable intellectuals and social reformers. Ambedkar's most scathing critique of the caste system came in his 1936 essay Annihilation of Caste, originally written as a speech that was never delivered due to its bold content.

"Caste is not a division of labour; it is a division of labourers. It is a hierarchy in which the division of labourers is graded one above the other," he wrote — words that continue to resonate in classrooms, protests and policy debates around caste, reservation, and social justice.

Over time, Ambedkar's legacy has seen a resurgence — not just through statues and portraits in public spaces but through popular culture, academic scholarship, and protest politics. While political leaders across party lines pay tribute on his anniversary, their interpretations of his legacy vary widely.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently said that building a "developed and inclusive Bharat" would be the truest tribute to Ambedkar. Congress leader Rahul Gandhi, meanwhile, has repeatedly called for a caste census, aligning it with Ambedkar's pursuit of equality.

"Caste census is an important step towards bringing out the truth of inequality and discrimination, which its opponents do not want revealed.

"Babasaheb's dream is still incomplete. His fight is not just for the past, it is a fight for today as well - we will fight it with all our might," Gandhi said in a recent post.

Yet, many scholars argue that while symbolic tributes to Ambedkar have multiplied, the structural caste-based injustices he fought remain deeply entrenched.

According to 2022 data from the National Crime Records Bureau, a total of 57,582 cases were registered for crimes against Scheduled Castes (SCs).

Ambedkar had foreseen dangers related to caste-based crimes and warned about it in his final speech to the Constituent Assembly on 25 November, 1949.

"Political democracy cannot last unless there lies at the base of it social democracy…a way of life which recognises liberty, equality, fraternity as the principles of life," he had said, as per the Dr Babasaheb Ambedkar Writings and Speeches (BAWS) Vol 13.

Beyond caste, Ambedkar's vision extended to economic justice, education, gender rights, and state planning.

His correspondence with African-American thinker WEB Du Bois reflected the global dimensions of his struggle. There is much similarity between the position of the Untouchables in India and of the position of the African Americans in America, Ambedkar wrote in 1946, according to BAWS Vol 10.

In 2025, Ambedkar's vision endures in his fundamental belief: democracy cannot thrive without social and economic justice. *—PTI*

LETTERS write to us at salarenglishdigital@gmail.com

SALAR

Zuck may be forced to sell WhatsApp, Instagram

Meta Platforms Inc. faces a historic antitrust trial beginning Monday that could force the tech giant to break off Instagram and WhatsApp, startups it bought more than a decade ago that have since grown into social media powerhouses.

The looming antitrust trial will be the first big test of President Donald Trump's Federal Trade Commission's ability to challenge Big Tech. The lawsuit was filed against Meta — then called Facebook — in 2020, during Trump's first term.

It claims the company bought Instagram and WhatsApp to squash competition and establish an illegal monopoly in the social media market. Meta, the FTC argues, has maintained a monopoly by pursuing CEO Mark Zuckerberg's strategy, "expressed in 2008: It is better to buy than compete.' True to that maxim, Facebook has systematically tracked potential rivals and acquired companies that it viewed as serious competitive threats."

Facebook also enacted policies designed to make it difficult for smaller rivals to enter the market and "neutralize perceived competitive threats," the FTC says in its complaint, just as the world shifted its attention to mobile devices from desktop computers.

"Unable to maintain its monopoly by fairly competing, the company's executives addressed the existential threat by buying up new innovators that were succeeding where Facebook failed," the FTC says.

Facebook bought Instagram, then a scrappy photo-sharing app with no ads and a small cult following — in 2012. The USD one billion cash and stock purchase price was eye-popping at the time, though the deal's value fell to USD 750 million after Facebook's stock price dipped following its initial public offering in May 2012.Instagram was the first company Facebook bought and kept running as a separate app. Up until then, Facebook was known for smaller "acqui-hires" — a type of popular Silicon Valley deal in which a company purchases a startup as a way to hire its talented workers, then shuts the acquired company down. Two years later, it did it again with the messaging app WhatsApp, which it purchased for USD 22 billion.

WhatsApp and Instagram helped Facebook move its business from desktop computers to mobile devices, and to remain popular with younger generations as rivals like Snapchat (which it also tried, but failed, to buy) and TikTok emerged. However, the FTC has a narrow definition of Meta's competitive market, excluding companies like TikTok, YouTube and Apple's messaging service from being considered rivals to Instagram and WhatsApp.

"The FTC already has the difficult task, whether it's looking at 10 years ago or five years ago or today, of trying to define what is the market we're talking about in a sufficiently narrow way that it can show Meta has a ton of power in that market," said Paul Swanson, an antitrust attorney for the law firm Holland & Hart. "And I do think that challenge has gotten harder as the years have gone by and we see more and more potential competitors in social media spaces."

Meta, meanwhile, says the FTC's lawsuit "defies reality."'"The evidence at trial will show what every 17-year-old in the world knows: Instagram, Facebook and WhatsApp compete with Chinese-owned TikTok, YouTube, X, iMessage and many others. More than 10 years after the FTC reviewed and cleared our acquisitions, the Commission's action in this case sends the message that no deal is ever truly final. Regulators should be supporting American innovation, rather than seeking to break up a great American company and further advantaging China on critical issues like AI," the company said in a statement.

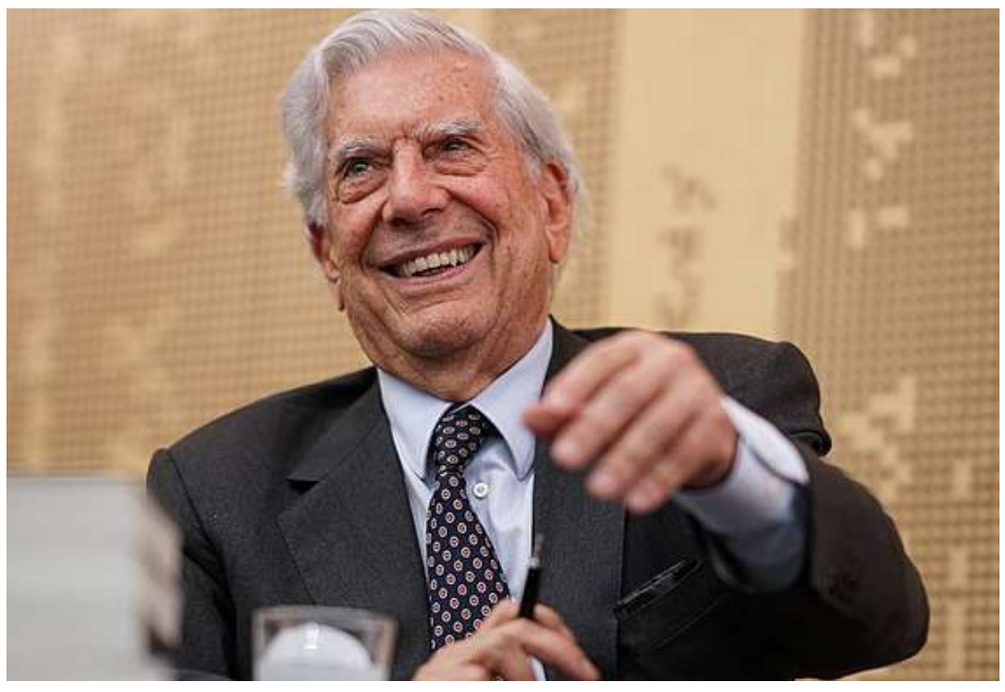
In a filing last week, Meta also stressed that the FTC "must prove that Meta has monopoly power in its claimed relevant market now, not at some time in the past." This, experts say, could also prove challenging since more competitors have emerged in the social media space in the years since the company bought WhatsApp and Instagram.

Meta's fate will be decided by US District Judge James Boasberg, who late last year denied Meta's request for a summary judgment and ruled that the case must go to trial.

Boasberg "seems to be skeptical" of the FTC's narrow market definition in his rulings to date, Swanson said. He added that the judge also said it is a "fact question," which means he is open to hearing what the FTC and its experts have to say to define that narrow market. While the FTC may face an uphill battle in proving its case, the stakes are high for Meta, whose advertising business could be cut in half if it's forced to spin off Instagram. *—PTI*

Federal Trade Commission claims the company bought Instagram and WhatsApp to squash competition and establish an illegal monopoly in the social media market ***PHOTO: INSTAGRAM @ZUCK***

Nobel laureate in literature Mario Vargas Llosa dies at 89



Vargas Llosa published his first collection of stories 'The Cubs and Other Stories' in 1959 ***PHOTO: WIKICOMMONS***

Peruvian author Mario Vargas Llosa, Nobel literature laureate and a giant of Latin American letters for many decades, has died, his son said Sunday. He was 89.

"It is with deep sorrow that we annouce that our father, Mario Vargas Llosa, passed away peacefully in Lima today, surrounded by his family," read a letter signed by his children Álvaro, Gonzalo and Morgana, and posted by Álvaro on X. The letter says that his remains will be cremated and that there won't be any public ceremony. "His departure will sadden his relatives, his friends and his readers around the world, but we hope that they will find comfort, as we do, in the fact that he enjoyed a long, adventurous and fruitful life, and leaves behind him a body of work that will outlive him," they added.

He was author of such celebrated novels as "The Time of the Hero" (La Ciudad y los Perros) and "Feast of the Goat."A prolific novelist and essayist and winner of myriad prizes, Vargas Llosa was awarded the Nobel in 2010 after being considered a contender for many years. Vargas Llosa published his first collection of stories "The Cubs and Other Stories" (Los Jefes) in 1959. But he burst onto the literary stage in 1963 with his groundbreaking debut novel "The Time of the Hero," a book that drew on his experiences at a Peruvian military academy and angered the country's military. A thousand copies of the novel were burned by military authorities, with some generals calling the book false and Vargas Llosa a communist.

That, and subsequent novels such as "Conversation in the Cathedral," (Conversación en la Catedral) in 1969, quickly established Vargas Llosa as one of the leaders of the so-called "Boom," or new wave of Latin American writers of the 1960s and 1970s, alongside Gabriel García Márquez and Carlos Fuentes.

Vargas Llosa started writing early, and at 15 was a part-time crime reporter for La Crónica newspaper. According to his official website, other jobs he had included revising names on cemetery tombs in Peru, working as a teacher in the Berlitz school in Paris and briefly on the Spanish desk at Agence France-Presse in Paris. He continued publishing articles in the press for most of his life, most notably in a twice-monthly political opinion column titled "Piedra de Toque" (Touchstones) that was printed in several newspapers.

Vargas Llosa came to be a fierce defender of personal and economic liberties, gradually edging away from his communism-linked past, and regularly attacked Latin American leftist leaders he viewed as dictators.

Although an early supporter of the Cuban revolution led by Fidel Castro, he later grew disillusioned and denounced Castro's Cuba. By 1980, he said he no longer believed in socialism as a solution for developing nations. In a famous incident in Mexico City in 1976, Vargas Llosa punched fellow Nobel Prize winner and ex-friend García Márquez, whom he later ridiculed as "Castro's courtesan." It was never clear whether the fight was over politics or a personal dispute, as neither writer ever wanted to discuss it publicly.

As he slowly turned his political trajectory toward free-market conservatism, Vargas Llosa lost the support of many of his Latin American literary contemporaries and attracted much criticism even from admirers of his work.

Jorge Mario Pedro Vargas Llosa was born March 28, 1936, in Peru's southern city of Arequipa, high in the Andes at the foot of the Misti volcano.

His father, Ernesto Vargas Maldonado, left the family before he was born. To avoid public scandal, his mother, Dora Llosa Ureta, took her child to Bolivia, where her father was the Peruvian consul in Cochabamba.

Vargas Llosa said his early life was "somewhat traumatic," pampered by his mother and grandmother in a large house with servants, his every whim granted. It was not until he was 10, after the family had moved to Peru's coastal city of Piura, that he learned his father was alive. His parents reconciled and the family moved to Peru's capital, Lima. Vargas Llosa described his father as a disciplinarian who viewed his son's love of Jules Verne and writing poetry as surefire routes to starvation, and feared for his "manhood," believing that "poets are always homosexuals."

After failing to get the boy enrolled in a naval academy because he was underage, Vargas Llosa's father sent him to Leoncio Prado Military Academy — an experience that was to stay with Vargas Llosa and led to "The Time of the Hero." The book won the Spanish Critics Award. The military academy "was like discovering hell," Vargas Llosa said later.

He entered Peru's San Marcos University to study literature and law, "the former as a calling and the latter to please my family, which believed, not without certain cause, that writers usually die of hunger." After earning his literature degree in 1958 — he didn't bother submitting his final law thesis — Vargas Llosa won a scholarship to pursue a doctorate in Madrid.

Vargas Llosa drew much of his inspiration from his Peruvian homeland, but preferred to live abroad, residing for spells each year in Madrid, New York and Paris.

His early novels revealed a Peruvian world of military arrogance and brutality, of aristocratic decadence, and of Stone Age Amazon Indians existing simultaneously with 20th-century urban blight.

In 1965, he married his first cousin, Patricia Llosa, 10 years his junior, and together they had three children.

They divorced 50 years later, and he started a relationship with Spanish society figure Isabel Preysler, former wife of singer Julio Iglesias and mother of singer Enrique Iglesias. *—PTI*

PHOTO: X

Suspected US airstrikes kill 6 in Yemen

DUBAI, 14 APRIL

Suspected US airstrikes around Yemen's rebel-held capital killed six people and wounded 30 overnight, Houthis claimed on Monday The intense campaign of US airstrikes targeting the Houthis over their attacks on shipping in Mideast has killed over 120 people. Footage aired by the Houthis' al-Masirah satellite news channel showed firefighters spraying water on a raging fire reportedly sparked by the airstrikes. Rescuers carried one person away from the site, which the rebels claimed was a ceramics factory in Sanaa. The US military's Central Command, which oversees American military operations, did not acknowledge the strikes. The White House has confirmed over 200 strikes to have been concluded so far. *—PTI*

Indian candidates to contest Singapore election

SINGAPORE, 14 APRIL

The ruling People's Action Party (PAP) will include members of Indian community in the upcoming general election, Singaporean Prime Minister Lawrence Wong has said, acknowledging the ethnic group's outsized contributions to the country. Addressing Indian youths at the VaangalppoPesalaam Chat organized by a Tamil newspaper on 13 April, Wong said: "You may be a small community, but, certainly, your contributions to Singapore and the impact that you have on Singapore are not small at all." Indians represented 7.6 per cent of Singapore's citizens, while Malays and Chinese made up 15.1 percent and 75.6 percent of the population respectively in 2024. PAP will field 30 candidates, including Indians in the upcoming election to be held this year.*—PTI*

UK MP, Hasina's niece deny graft allegations

LONDON, 14 APRIL

Labour Party MP Tulip Siddiq, the niece of Bangladesh's deposed prime minister Sheikh Hasina, has denied any wrongdoing after reports emerged of an arrest warrant issued by Dhaka's Anti-Corruption Commission (ACC). Siddiq, 42, resigned as UK treasury minister in January this year, saying her family connections were becoming a "distraction" for the work of Prime Minister Keir Starmer-led government. Starmer's independent adviser on ministers' interests had also not found her in breach of the ministerial code. Her spokesperson said the allegations of corruption against Siddiq were "completely false" and her lawyers had dealt with that. *—PTI*

Earthquakes shake Tajikistan and Fiji Islands

SUVA / DUSHANBE, 14 APRIL

An earthquake of magnitude 6.3 struck South of the Fiji Islands on Monday, while another earthquake of magnitude 4.2 shook Tajikistan, the National Center for Seismology (NCS) said. Both eartrhquakes occurred at a shallow depth of 10km, making them susceptible to aftershocks. Two more earthquakes shook Tajikistan on 12 April, with the first measuring 6.1 and the second 3.9. The south of the Fiji Islands is located within the Fiji Seismic Zone. Fiji is situated within the Circum-Pacific Seismic Belt, called the 'Ring of Fire', experiences high seismic activity. This zone experiences numerous earthquakes, including some of significant magnitude. Tajikistan, a mountainous country with diverse topography, is especially vulnerable to climate hazards like earthquakes, floods, drought and avalanches. *—PTI*

China's exports jump 12.4%, imports fall

On his SE Asia tour, Xi says there are no winners in tariff war as Trump tries to play it cool

BEIJING/WASHINGTON, 14 APRIL

China's exports jumped 12.4% in March from a year earlier as companies rushed to beat increases in US tariffs imposed by US President Donald Trump, the government said Monday.

Imports fell 4.3%, the customs administration reported, even as the Trump administration officials were out in force across the television networks Sunday defending President Donald Trump's economic policies after another week of reeling markets that saw the Republican administration reverse course on some of its steepest tariffs.

White House advisers and Cabinet members tried to project confidence and calm amid Trump's on-again, off-again approach to tariffs on imported goods from around the world.

But their explanations about the overall agenda also reflected shifting narratives from a president who, as a candidate in 2024, promised an immediate economic boost and lower prices but now asks American businesses and consumers for patience.

Chinese President Xi Jinping with Vietnamese Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh in Hanoi, Vietnam *PHOTO: PTI*

Almost every week, '60 Minutes'... mentions the name 'TRUMP' in a derogatory and defamatory way, but this Weekend's 'BROADCAST' tops them all
-Donald Trump, US President

China's trade surplus with the United States was $27.6 billion in March as its exports rose 4.5%. It logged a surplus of $76.6 billion with the US in the first quarter of the year.

China is facing 145% tariffs on most exports to the United States as of the most recent revisions in Trump's trade policies.

However, the biggest increases in exports were to China's Southeast Asian neighbors, which saw exports from China jump nearly 17% in March from a year earlier. Exports to Africa rose more than 11%. China has gone on a charm offensive with all neighbouring countries, with the Chinese premier Xi Jinping visiting three ASEAN countries seeking to insulate itself from Trump's tariffs

"There are no winners in a trade war, or a tariff war," Xi wrote in an editorial jointly published in Vietnamese and Chinese official media. "Our two countries should resolutely safeguard the multilateral trading system, stable global industrial and supply chains, and open and cooperative international environment." In Vietnam, Xi will meet with Vietnam's Communist Party General Secretary To Lam, as well as the Prime Minister Pham Minh Chinh. *—PTI*

Wisconsin boy charged with killing parents to fund Trump's assassination

MILWAUKEE, 13 APRIL

A Wisconsin teenager charged in the deaths of his parents faces wider allegations that he killed them to "obtain the financial means" to assassinate President Donald Trump and overthrow the government, according to a recently unsealed federal warrant. Nikita Casap 17, charged with plotting and murdering his parents, shot them at their home outside Milwaukee, lived with the decomposing bodies for weeks before fleeing with USD 14000 cash, passports and the family dog. The warrant contains excerpts of communications on TikTok and the Telegram messenger app, of buying a drone and explosives and authorities found evidence that he shared his plans with others, including a Russian speaker. His intentions are detailed in a three-page anti-semitic manifesto praising Adolf Hitler. —PTI

Next round of US-Iran talks in Rome: Sources

ROME, 14 APRIL

US President Donald Trump exuded confidence saying a decision on Iran would be made very quickly even as sources said the next round of talks between Iran and the United States over Teheran's rapidly advancing nuclear programme is likely to take place in Rome.

Speaking to journalists on Air Force One on Sunday, Trump said he met with Witkoff and that his envoy had "very good meetings on the Middle East."

"We'll be making a decision on Iran very quickly," Trump said, without elaborating.

The Italian Foreign Minister Antonio Tajani separately told journalists in Osaka, Japan, that the Italian government has given its OK to host the talks.

"We received the request from the interested parties, from Oman, which plays the role of mediator and we gave a positive response," Tajani said. "We are ready to welcome, as always, meetings that can bring positive results, in this case on the nuclear issue."

Both Iranian and US officials did not immediately acknowledge the venue of the second round of negotiations.

Meanwhile, the head of the United Nations' nuclear watchdog separately confirmed he would be taking a trip to Iran later in the week, possibly to discuss ways to improve access for his inspectors to Tehran's programme. The stakes of the negotiations couldn't be higher for the two nations closing in on half a century of enmity. Trump repeatedly has threatened to unleash airstrikes targeting Iran's nuclear programme if a deal isn't reached. Iranian officials increasingly warn that they could pursue a nuclear weapon with their stockpile of uranium enriched to near weapons-grade levels. *—PTI*

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Russia's attack on Sumy crosses line of decency: US

BRUSSELS, 14 APRIL

European officials condemned Russia's deadly missile attack on Ukraine's Sumy that killed and wounded scores, even as US envoy to Russia joined issue saying Russia crossed a "line of decency" in the attack on civilians gathering for church services on Palm Sunday.

The attacks left bodies littering the streets and scenes of devastation reminiscent of the early days of the war.

Keith Kellogg, the Ukraine-Russia envoy for US and former general, said, "Today's Palm Sunday attack by Russian forces on civilian targets in Sumy crosses any line of decency. There are scores of civilian dead and wounded. As a former military leader, I understand targeting and this is wrong. It is why President Trump is working hard to end this war."

European leaders were united in condemning the attack. Polish Foreign Minister Radek Sikorski, told reporters in Luxemborg that he hoped The US administration would see that Putin was "mocking their goodwill" and take right decisions.

French Foreign Minister Jean-Noël Barrot said the attack shows that Putin has no intention of agreeing to a ceasefire and called for more sanctions on Russia. The EU has imposed 16 rounds of sanctions on Russia and is working on a 17th package, but the measures are getting harder to agree on as they also impact European economies.

Germany's chancellor-designate, Friedrich Merz, described the Sumy attack late Sunday as "a serious war crime" and made clear that he stands by his past calls to send Taurus long-range cruise missiles to Ukraine, something that outgoing Chancellor Olaf Scholz refused to do.

Asking about the attack, Trump said late Sunday evening that he was trying to get the war stopped. "I think it was terrible and I was told they made a mistake, but I think it's a horrible thing. I think the whole war is a horrible thing," he told reporters aboard Air Force One as he returned to Washington. He did not clarify whether he was saying the attack was unintentional.

Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelenskyy meanwhile invited Trump to visit the country and witness the devastation due to the war himself before taking decisions.

"Please, before any kind of decisions, any kind of forms of negotiations, come to see people, civilians, warriors, hospitals, churches, children destroyed or dead," Zelensky said in an interview for CBS's 60 Minutes programme. *—PTI*

A man weeps at the site that was hit by a Russian missile in Sumy, Ukraine *PHOTO: PTI*

Come, look, and then let's move with a plan on how to finish the war. You (Donald Trump) will understand what Putin did
Volodymyr Zelenskyy, Ukraine President

I think it (Sumy attack) was terrible. And I was told they (Russia) made a mistake. But I think it's a horrible thing
Donald Trump, US President

Violence hit Ecuador re-elects millionaire Noboa as President

QUITO, 14 APRIL

Ecuadorian voters weary of crime on Sunday reelected President Daniel Noboa, a conservative young millionaire with a divisive no-holds-barred crimefighting record, but his opponent vowed to seek a recount over what she described as "grotesque" electoral fraud.

Figures released by Ecuador's National Electoral Council show Noboa receiving 55.8 per cent of the vote with more than 90 per cent of ballots counted, while leftist lawyer Luisa González earned 44 per cent.

Primary issue in the election was the violence, starting in 2021, a spike in crime tied to the trafficking of cocaine produced in neighboring Colombia and Peru.

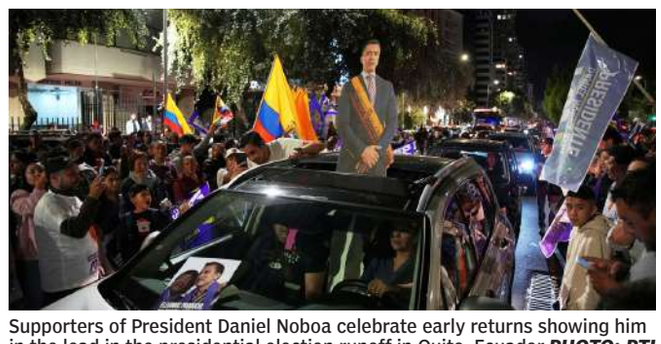
In 2023, Noboa and González were largely unknown to most voters as they sought the presidency for the first time. They were first-term lawmakers in May 2023, when then-President Guillermo Lasso dissolved the National Assembly, shortening his own mandate as a result and triggering that year's snap election.

Both candidates promised tough-on-crime policies, better equipment for law enforcement and international help to fight drug cartels and local criminal groups.

Noboa stunned voters by winning a snap election and a 16-month presidency despite his limited political experience in 2023.

Noboa, heir to a fortune built on the banana trade, is expected to continue applying some of his no-holds-barred crime fighting strategies that part of the electorate finds appealing but which have tested the limits of laws and norms of governing.

González who has refused recognise the results but defeat marks the third consecutive time that the party of Rafael Correa, the country's most influential president this century, failed to return to the presidency. *—PTI*



Supporters of President Daniel Noboa celebrate early returns showing him in the lead in the presidential election runoff in Quito, Ecuador *PHOTO: PTI*

PAK SEEKS ANSWERS AFTER 8 NATIONALS KILLED IN IRAN

ISLAMABAD, 14 APRIL

Islamabad has sought Tehran's "full cooperation" over the killing of eight Pakistani nationals in restive southeastern Iran, officials said on Monday.

The Pakistani foreign ministry said in a statement the killing happened Saturday in Mehrestan County in Sistan and Baluchistan province, about 230 kilometers (142 miles) from the Pakistan-Iran border, urging a thorough investigation. Pakistan's Ambassador to Iran, Muhammad Mudassir, wrote on X that Islamabad and Tehran were working on facilitating the repatriation of the bodies.

Iran's Ministry of Foreign Affairs condemned on Monday the killings and extended condolences to the Pakistani people and government.

"Iran will spare no effort in identifying the perpetrators and masterminds behind this atrocity and ensuring justice is duly served," the ministry said in a statement. *—PTI*

DESTINATION: SPACE

Katy Perry joins 1st ever all-women civilian crew to space

Pop star Katy Perry with billionaire Jeff Bezos' fiancée Lauren Sanchez and four other women roared into space on Blue Origin's rocket. This is the first all-female space crew since 1963. Here is all you need to know:

MEET THE CREW MEMBERS?

KATY PERRY, *American singer*

AMANDA NGUYEN, *campaigner against sexual violence*

LAUREN SANCHEZ, *American journalist*

GAYLE KING, *TV presenter & Oprah Winfrey best friend*

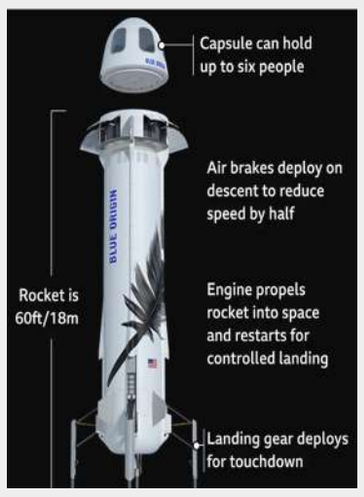
AISHA BOWE, *former NASA scientist*

KERIANNE FLYNN *film producer*

When Blue Origin was first talking about commercial travel to space, I was like, 'Sign me up! I'm first in line'. And then they called me, and I was like, 'Really? I get an invite?'
—Katy Perry, Singer

SPACECRAFT USED

New Shepard rocket by Blue Origin. The spacecraft is fully autonomous, requiring no pilots. The rocket is designed to be fully reusable.


Capsule can hold up to six people
Air brakes deploy on descent to reduce speed by half
Rocket is 60ft/18m
Engine propels rocket into space and restarts for controlled landing
Landing gear deploys for touchdown
BLUE ORIGIN

JOY RIDE TO SPACE

- Blast off from West Texas launch site at 7pm IST.
- The flight lasted around 11 minutes & took the crew more 100km above Earth, crossing the internationally recognised boundary of space -- Karman line.
- This allowed the women to unbuckle from their seats and float in zero gravity.
- The capsule returned to Earth with a parachute-assisted soft landing, while the rocket booster landed itself around 2 miles away from the launch site.

WHAT IS BLUE ORIGIN?

- Blue Origin is a private space tourism company founded in 2000 by Bezos.
- So far, the Amazon co-founder self-driven rockets have taken 52 people into space.
- Although Blue Origin has not released full ticket prices, a $1,50,000 (Rs 1.28 crore) deposit is required to reserve a seat.
- The company is also developing long-term space infrastructure, including reusable rockets and lunar landing systems.
- While Blue Origin focuses on sub-orbital flights for space tourists, the company has future plans to take passengers into orbit, directly competing with Elon Musk's SpaceX.

Optimised Electrotech raises about Rs 52 cr

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

Deep-tech imaging start-up Optimized Electrotech has raised USD six million, about Rs 52 crore, in a funding round led by Blume Ventures and Mela Ventures, the company said on Monday. The round saw participation from 9Unicorns and existing investors, including Rajiv Dadlani Group and Venture Catalysts. "We are committed to leveraging this capital to further enhance our technological capabilities, expand our footprint, and contribute meaningfully to India's strategic and security objectives," Optimized Electrotech Founder and Managing Director Sandeep Shah said. "This expansion will allow us to develop advanced solutions with wider and more diverse applicability, catering to multiple geographies and operational platforms. Furthermore, we aim to extend our reach to friendly foreign partners," Shah said. *—PTI*

PHOTO: ANI

Jupiter Ltd secures Rs 500 cr investment

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

Solar solutions provider Jupiter International Ltd on Monday said it has secured an investment of Rs 500 crore from ValueQuest SCALE Fund and its affiliates to accelerate solar manufacturing expansion. The company operates at a one gigawatt (GW) facility in Baddi, Himachal Pradesh, and plans to increase the total capacity to 5.6 GW solar cells and 2.4 GW solar modules, the company said in a statement. The present funding round of Rs 500 crore and internal accruals is proposed to support the company's ongoing capex programme, it said. "Jupiter's integrated approach makes it a key player in India's energy transition. This second investment reflects our trust in their ability to scale operations and drive renewable growth," said Ravi Dharamshi, Founder and CIO, ValueQuest. *—PTI*

HDFC to invest Rs 1.5K cr in Eldeco housing projects

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

HDFC Capital will invest Rs 1,500 crore in realty firm Eldeco Group's upcoming 18 housing projects in small towns where it sees huge demand for quality homes. These 18 housing projects are estimated to generate a total revenue of about Rs 11,000 crore. HDFC Capital Advisors Ltd, the real estate private equity arm of HDFC Group, has set up a property development platform in partnership with Delhi-based Eldeco Group. The platform will develop 18 residential projects in tier II-III cities across various states, including Haryana, Punjab, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand. The total developable area in these projects will be more than 10 million (100 lakh) square, HDFC Capital said. Eldeco Group will also put in money in this platform.*—PTI*

Investors' wealth erodes by Rs 11.30L cr amid tariff war

BSE benchmark gauge has slumped 1,460.18 pts since 2 April

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

Investors' wealth eroded by Rs 11.30 lakh crore since early this month, as stock markets experienced turbulence due to US massive tariff plan.

This is followed by growing concerns of a tit-for-tat trade war between China and the US.

Since 2 April, the BSE benchmark gauge has slumped 1,460.18 points or 1.90 per cent.

Tracking uncertainty in equities, the market capitalisation of BSE-listed firms tumbled by Rs 11,30,627.09 crore to Rs 4,01,67,468.51 crore (USD 4.66 trillion) during this period.

Benchmark indices jumped nearly two per cent on Friday as investors rejoiced at the 90-day suspension of additional import duties by the US.

Markets remained closed on two occasions, on 10 April for Shri Mahavir Jayanti and 14 April due to Dr Baba Saheb Ambedkar Jayanti.

Trump unveiled a massive tariff plan in the first week of April. The White House later announced a 90-day pause on "reciprocal tariffs" for most countries except China, which in turn decided to impose 125 per cent tariffs on US imports.

China on Friday upped its additional tariff on US goods to 125 per cent, retaliating the America's 145 per cent levy.

"Markets had a rocky start to the new fiscal year after Trump announced sweeping reciprocal tariffs on the world. Global markets witnessed sharp losses, and India also was not immune to the sell-off but fared relatively better so far," Satish Chandra Aluri, Analyst at Lemonn Markets Desk, said.

The US, on 2 April, announced an additional 26 per cent tariff on Indian goods entering the US. But on 9 April, the Trump administration announced the suspension of these on India for 90 days until 9 July this year. However, the 10 per cent baseline tariff imposed on the countries will continue to remain in place. *—PTI*

Benchmark indices jumped nearly two per cent on Friday as investors rejoiced at the 90-day suspension of tariffs PHOTO: FREEPIK

SECOND LARGEST IN WORLD

Iphone maker Foxconn plans new plant in UP

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

iPhone manufacturer Foxconn is exploring the possibility of setting up a new manufacturing unit in Uttar Pradesh with around 300 acres of land.

The land for the new unit is reportedly near the Yamuna Expressway in Greater Noida.

The new facility is expected to create 40,000 jobs and will house all workers inside the complex.

Sources said the two sides have already held two rounds of meetings at Delhi and Lucknow on the proposed project. Foxconn already has a 50-acre joint venture project with HCL for an outsourced semiconductor assembly and test facility.

The land under discussion for the new plant is near to the Foxconn-HCL semiconductor assembly plant, they said.

The Noida–Greater Noida region already accounts for nearly 50 per cent of all mobile phone exports from the country.

"There is no better place than UP to have a facility for Apple. Locating it in Noida will add to the ecosystem in the region," sources added.

Reports said, the Greater Noida plant, once operational, would be Foxconn's first major unit in North India.

They said it could be larger than the company's upcoming plant in Bengaluru, which is expected to become Foxconn's second-largest unit globally. *—Agencies*

The report said that the targets of the layoffs included several high-salaried employees PHOTO: ANI

Dr Reddy's plans to lay off over 400 employees

HYDERABAD, 14 APRIL

Hyderabad-based Pharmaceutical giant Dr Reddy's Laboratories (DRL) has reportedly offered voluntary retirement to employees aged 50–55 in the R&D division, a report said.

The report said, it may also shut down its digital therapeutics unit and downsize its nutraceutical division.

The company is targeting a reduction of 25 per cent in workforce-related expenses after spending thousands of crores of rupees upskilling its employees.

The Business Standard reported that the targets of the layoffs included several high-salaried employees, many with an annual salary of more than Rs 1 crore. An estimated 300 to 400 employees may be affected across the organisation.

The company's FY24 annual report said that it employed 26,343 people globally, including 21,757 permanent staff, as of 31 March, 2024. It hired 6,281 employees during the year, with a median salary of Rs 6 lakh.

In FY24, DRL spent Rs 5,030 crore on employee benefits and Rs 39.2 crore on training and development, with 92 per cent of staff undergoing skill upgrades. The BS report said that a 25 per cent cut in employee costs could save the company approximately Rs 1,300 crore a year.

"Average percentage increase in the salaries of employees other than KMP for FY2024, was 9 per cent as compared to FY2023. There was an increase of 14 per cent in the total remuneration of Executive Directors and KMP for FY2024 on account of computation of remuneration, on accrual basis to Executive Directors and on actual basis for KMP," the company's FY24 annual report said. *—Agencies*

Govt's 10K cr fund to help AI, age tech startups

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

The Commerce and Industry Ministry will allocate a major part of the second Rs 10,000-crore Fund of Funds Scheme (FFS) for startups to help budding entrepreneurs.

The sectors such as new-age technology, artificial intelligence and machine building will be in focus, an official said.

In the Budget, the government announced a new FFS with a corpus of Rs 10,000 crore. "We are going to dedicate a lot of this Rs 10,000 crore FFS largely for the new age tech, AI and machine building," the official said.

The 2016 scheme was set up to catalyse venture capital investments and is operationalised by the Small Industries Development Bank of India (SIDBI), which provides capital to Securities and Exchange Board of India (Sebi)-registered AIFs, which in turn invest in startups.

The SIDBI is expected to manage the second scheme also, the official added.

According to the government's eligibility conditions, entities are recognised as startups under the Startup India initiative by the department. So far, over 1,50,000 entities have been recognised as startups across more than 55 industries. *—PTI*

Tariff paused, India to export 40,000 tonnes shrimp to US

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

India's seafood exporters are preparing to ship 35,000–40,000 tonnes of shrimp to the US with orders remaining stable after the pause of reciprocal tariff.

US President Donald Trump paused a planned 26 per cent reciprocal tariff, reducing the duty to 10 per cent, industry officials said on Monday.

"There is much relief now, as we are at par with other exporters to the US. Now the shipments that were held back will be processed," said Seafood Exporters Association of India Secretary General KN Raghavan.

About 2,000 containers of shrimp that had been delayed are now being readied for export following Trump's 9 April decision to pause the higher tariffs just one week after announcing them on 2 April, he said. The temporary reprieve maintains a 10 per cent blanket tariff on all countries except China, which faces a 145 per cent duty.

Currently, Indian shrimp exports to the US face an effective customs duty of 17.7 per cent PHOTO: PIXABAY

Currently, Indian shrimp exports to the US face an effective customs duty of 17.7 per cent, including 5.7 per cent in countervailing duties and 1.8 per cent in anti-dumping duty.

Industry sources explained that Indian exporters typically bear tariff costs under delivery duty-paid arrangements, meaning previously contracted shipments would have faced significant additional expenses under the higher tariff. "The 90-day pause provides exporters the opportunity to fulfil these orders without the extra cost," a source said.

The association reported no drop in orders from the US, which remains India's largest shrimp market both in volume and value. *—PTI*

Building deep tech isn't startups' responsibility: Biz honcho Sanjeev

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

Joining the debate on Indian startups' focus on online deliveries and betting apps instead of deep tech, tech founder Sanjeev Bikhchandani on Monday said building deep tech isn't the responsibility of startups because funds required for it are too large, and the government as well as deep-pocketed groups such as Reliance and Adani will need to step in.

In a longish post on X, Bikhchandani, a serial entrepreneur whose ventures include job portal Naukri.com, and matrimony site Jeevansathi.com and co-founding Ashoka University, said unlike startup funding, deep tech investing needs funds with a longer time horizon of more than 20-25 years.

"But even so if you can't make commercial sense out of it, they can't carry on indefinitely without financial support," he said. "And therefore, there is this gap between it being a national priority versus it making sense for an individual entrepreneur or an individual founding team and individual VC firms. This gap needs to be bridged."

He said deep tech companies are difficult to fund because of the time it takes from idea to actually building a product, to finding customers, to monetisation, to product market fit, to growth and eventually to profit.

There is very little visibility for the first few years. This is especially so in India where the market for such stuff tends to be smaller than it is in the US. *– PTI*

'In 2024, hospitality sector preferred tier 2 cities'

LUCKNOW, 14 APRIL

India's hospitality sector, which grew at par with the previous year, witnessed a shift towards tier-II and III cities, which accounted for nearly half of all hotel transactions, a report said on Monday.

The year 2024 saw approximately 25 deals, primarily involving operational properties in both business and leisure destinations, real estate consultant JLL said in a report. It said there was a significant shift towards tier-II and III cities, which accounted for nearly half of all hotel transactions.

This trend has effectively broadened the industry's reach, bringing quality accommodations to previously underserved markets such as Amritsar, Mathura, Bikaner, and several others, it added.

During 2024, the report said, saw investor diversity with high-net-worth individuals, family offices, and private hotel owners contributing 51 per cent of the transaction volume. Listed hotel companies followed closely at 34 per cent, while owner-operators and real estate developers made smaller but significant contributions at 8 per cent and 7 per cent, respectively, it stated.

The number of greenfield projects in 2024 (28,281 keys) crossed the full year of 2023 (13,600 keys), indicating the enduring confidence of hotel developers in the sector's long-term growth.Tier I markets such as Mumbai, Bengaluru, Hyderabad, Pune, and Chennai saw signings of hotels with over 250 keys, signalling sustained interest in these hubs due to robust domestic demand and thriving commercial activity, said the report.

"The first quarter of 2025 has ignited a dynamic hotel transactions market, with JLL already facilitating two deals in Chennai and Goa. *– ANI*

Edible oil industry body flags trade distortions

LUCKNOW, 14 APRIL

The Indian Vegetable Oil Producers' Association (IVPA), an industry body representing India's edible oil refining industry, has submitted a formal representation to the central government departments.

Their concern were around the surge in duty-free edible oil imports from Nepal under the South Asian Free Trade Area (SAFTA) framework.

According to IVPA, imports from Nepal rose sharply in early 2025, reaching over 1.80 lakh metric tons between January and March--up from 1.25 lakh tons in the whole of 2024.

IVPA said most of the 1.25 lakh tons of imports in 2024 arrived in India only during the October- December quarter, following a hike in Indian duties, possibly due to the rerouted soya imports to India via Nepal. *– ANI*

SBI passes on RBI rate cut benefit to borrowers, reduces rate by 25 bps

LUCKNOW, 14 APRIL

The country's largest lender State Bank of India (SBI) has reduced its lending rate by 25 basis points following the Reserve Bank's policy rate cut, making loans cheaper for both existing and new borrowers..

With the latest round of reduction, the Repo Linked Lending Rate (RLLR) of SBI would come down by 25 basis points to 8.25 per cent.

It has also reduced the External Benchmark Based Lending Rate (EBLR) by similar basis points to 8.65 per cent. The revised rates come into effect from April 15, 2025, according to updated rate information on SBI's website.

The rate reduction is in response to last week's RBI slashing key interest rate by 25 basis points for the second time in a row to support growth facing the threat of reciprocal tariffs by the US.

Besides, the bank also cut deposit rates by 10-25 basis points, which will again be effective from 15 April.

With the revision, for fixed deposits up to Rs three crore, the interest rate on one-two year term deposits will be lower by 10 basis points to 6.70 per cent, and deposits having two years to less than three years maturity will attract 6.90 per cent as against seven per cent.

In case of fixed deposits over Rs three crore, term deposits of maturity 180 days to 210 days have been reduced by 20 basis points to 6.40 per cent while for 211 days to less than one year by 25 basis points to 6.50 per cent.

Similarly, the new interest rate would be 6.80 per cent from seven per cent, and for two-three years would be 6.75 per cent from seven per cent, a reduction of 25 basis points.

SBI green rupee term deposit is available for three specific tenors of 1111, 1777 and 2222 days, at 10 bps below card rate.

The specific tenor scheme of '444 days' at interest rate 7.05 per cent is effective from 15 April, and senior citizens are offered a rate of interest of 7.55 per cent and super senior citizens a rate of interest of 7.65 per cent. *– ANI*

'THE GOLCONDA BLUE'

Rarest blue diamond set for auction debut

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

A rare Indian royal heritage, 'The Golconda Blue' -- historic diamond once owned by Maharajas of Indore and Baroda, set to make its auction debut at Christie's "Magnificent Jewels" sale in Geneva on 14 May.

The 23.24-carat vivid blue diamond, mounted in a striking modern ring by celebrated Parisian designer JAR, is expected to fetch an estimated value between USD 35 and USD 50 million (Rs 300 – Rs 430 crore).

"Exceptional noble gems of this caliber come to market once in a lifetime. Over the course of its 259-year history, Christie's has had the honor of offering some of the world's most important Golconda diamonds, including the Archduke Joseph, the Princie, and the Wittelsbach.

23.24-carat blue diamond has its origins in Golconda mines of present-day Telangana PHOTO: INSTAGRAM @christiesinc

"With its Royal heritage, extraordinary color, and exceptional size, 'The Golconda Blue' is truly one of the rarest blue diamonds in the world," Rahul Kadakia, Christie's International head of Jewelry, said in a statement.

Hailed as one of the most important and rarest blue diamonds ever discovered, what makes the auction more significant for Indian audiences is its direct lineage to Indian royalty -- and its origins in the legendary Golconda mines of present-day Telangana, renowned for producing the world's most iconic diamonds.

According to Christie's, it once belonged to Maharaja Yeshwant Rao Holkar II of Indore, a modernist monarch celebrated for his refined taste and cosmopolitan lifestyle during 1920s and '30s. *—PTI*

Indian-origin golfers Rai, Theegala finish in Top-30

AUGUSTA, 14 APRIL

Indian-origin golfers Aaron Rai, Sahith Theegala, and Akshay Bhatia delivered commendable performances at the Masters, with two finishing in the Top 30. Making his debut, Rai scored a 70 to end the tournament at one-under, securing a T-27 position. Theegala, playing his third Masters, carded a 71 and finished T-29 after a four-day total of even par. Bhatia, in his second appearance, shot a 71, concluding the event at four-over 292 and placing T-42.\ At the top of the leaderboard, Rory McIlroy celebrated a dramatic victory, marking his fifth Major title after an 11-year wait. Despite a shaky start with a double bogey, McIlroy triumphed in a play-off against Justin Rose, who finished runner-up for the third time. Patrick Reed and defending champion Scottie Scheffler rounded out the top four, respectively, at third and fourth. *—PTI*

Mykolas Alekna sets world record with 247-feet throw

RAMONA, 14 APRIL

Mykolas Alekna, the Lithuanian discus thrower, has set a new world record twice at the Oklahoma Throws Series World Invitational. The 22-year-old athlete launched the discus to an impressive distance of 75.56 metres after surpassing his earlier attempt of 74.89 metres, both of which are subject to ratification. Alekna's record-breaking performance comes a year after he shattered a long-standing world record from 1986 at the same event and subsequently secured a silver medal at the 2024 Paris Olympics. Currently in his fourth year at the University of California, he is the son of Virgilijus Alekna, a two-time Olympic champion in the discus. Previously, Australian Matt Denny, who won bronze at the 2024 Olympics, held the world record with a throw of 74.78 metres. *—PTI*

5 new players join women's hockey team for Aus tour

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

Hockey India has announced a 26-member women's squad for a significant five-match tour of Australia from April 26 to May 4, featuring five players earning their first senior national call-ups. Jyoti Singh, Sujata Kujur, Ajmina Kujur, Pooja Yadav, and Mahima Tete are set to make their senior debuts as India faces Australia A in the first two matches, followed by three encounters with the senior Australians at the Perth Hockey Stadium. The squad will be led by dynamic midfielder Salima Tete, with experienced forward Navneet Kaur as her deputy. Chief coach Harendra Singh highlighted the tour as an essential opportunity to evaluate skills and strategies against top-level opponents while preparing for the European leg of the FIH Pro League later this year. The team is reportedly in good physical and mental shape following a rigorous training camp in Bengaluru. *—PTI*

Punjab Kings in pitch dilemma at Mullanpur

Team management mulling strategy for Tuesday's match against Kolkata Knight Riders

MULLANPUR, 14 APRIL

A beleaguered Punjab Kings need to pick up pieces after being blown away by "tornado" Abhishek Sharma as they face another challenging fight against Kolkata Knight Riders at Mullanpur on Tuesday.

It is a rarity that a team loses after putting on board a mammoth score like 245, but Punjab Kings had to endure a hard-to-digest defeat due to Abhishek Sharma's whirlwind knock of 141 off just 55 balls in their previous match against Sunrisers Hyderabad.

On Tuesday, though, Punjab will play at their home in Mullanpur where the pitch is also conducive for batters. In the two matches at Mullanpur, 200-plus scores were managed by team batting first.

THE DILEMMA

If Punjab goes for a flat deck, there is no guarantee that the bowling unit can defend anything in the 220 range, especially when KKR have the likes of Sunil Narine, Rinku Singh, and Venkatesh Iyer in their rank. One piece of statistics that head coach Ricky Ponting wouldn't like to look at is Punjab bowling unit's economy rate. None of the bowlers has gone below nine runs an over. On the other hand, if Iyer and Ponting asks the curator to prepare a track ready where the ball would grip and offer uneven bounce, it could well boomerang on them. *—PTI*

Punjab Kings put on board a mammoth 245 but had to endure a shaming defeat after Sunrisers Hyderabad's Abhishek Sharma took 141 off just 55 balls in their previous match on Saturday *PHOTO: PTI*

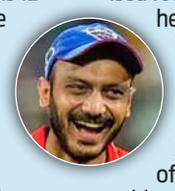
KKR VS CSK

HEAD TO HEAD	
PLAYED:	29
KKR Won:	19
PBKS Won:	10

KKR vs PBKS Match starts at **7.30 pm IST**

Axar fined ₹12L for slow over-rate

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL



Delhi Capitals' captain Axar Patel has been fined Rs 12 lakh for slow over-rate during his team's narrow 12-run defeat to Mumbai Indians in an IPL match. The Indians posted a total of 205 for 5 in their 20 overs, while the Capitals were all out for 193 in 19 overs. The BCCI confirmed that Patel was penalised following the game, held at the Arun Jaitley Stadium in Delhi, as it was the team's first offence of the season under Article 2.22 of the IPL's Code of Conduct, which addresses minimum over-rate violations. *—PTI*

Mentally ready for my chance: Karun

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

In his return to the IPL, Karun Nair delivered an impressive performance for the Delhi Capitals, scoring 89 runs off 40 balls in a chase of 206. Despite his efforts, including hitting Jasprit Bumrah for two sixes in an over, Delhi fell short by 12 runs, finishing at 193 in 19 overs. Nair, who hadn't played in the league for two seasons, expressed confidence stemming from his extensive domestic season, where he scored 1,870 runs for Vidarbha. He emphasized the importance of preparation and being ready to seize opportunities. *—PTI*

Dhiraj Bommadevara bounced back from a 2–4 deficit to defeat Spain's Andres Temino Mediel 6–4 *PHOTO: ANI*

Dhiraj bags Bronze in Stage 1 Archery WC

AUBURNDALE, 14 APRIL

India concluded their campaign at the Archery World Cup Stage 1 with an impressive haul of four medals, including a silver in the men's recurve team event and a bronze for emerging talent Dhiraj Bommadevara in the individual recurve category.

The 23-year-old Army archer bounced back from a 2–4 deficit to defeat Spain's Andres Temino Mediel 6–4 in a thrilling five-set match. Earlier in the day, Dhiraj formed part of the Indian trio with veterans Tarundeep Rai and Atanu Das, who secured silver after a 1-5 defeat to China in the team final.

India's medal tally for the tournament consisted of a gold in the compound mixed team event, a bronze in the compound men's team, a silver in the recurve men's team, and Dhiraj's bronze in the individual recurve. Abhishek Verma narrowly missed out on a medal, finishing fourth in the compound men's individual section. *—PTI*

BILLIE JEAN KING CUP

USA, Japan book slots in finals

BRATISLAVA, 14 APRIL

The United States and Japan clinched their places in the Billie Jean King Cup Finals after impressive performances in the group stage.

Hailey Baptiste and Bernarda Pera delivered straight-set victories, leading the U.S. to a 2-1 triumph over the host nation, Slovakia. Baptiste defeated Renata Jamrichova 6-3, 6-4, while Pera edged Slovakian No. 1 Rebecca Sramkova 7-6 (2), 7-5. "Honestly, I'm so overwhelmed by the emotions, so happy," Pera expressed. "I had so much fun with the team; the girls are amazing, and I got so much support from all of them."

With this victory, the US topped Group C, having earlier defeated Denmark 3-0.

In Group A, Japan also secured its spot in the finals, with Ena Shibahara and Shuko Aoyama winning the crucial doubles match against Canadian duo Kayla Cross and Rebecca Marino 6-3, 5-7, 6-2. Canada initially led the tie when Victoria Mboko overcame Shibahara 6-4, 6-7 (8), 7-5, but Japan levelled the contest with Moyuka Uchijima's victory over Marina Stakusic 6-3, 6-3.

"I'm really happy that I got the doubles done today," Shibahara remarked.

The Billie Jean King Cup Finals will be organised in Shenzhen this September *PHOTO: X*

The Billie Jean King Cup Finals will take place in Shenzhen this September, marking Japan's second consecutive appearance in the finals as they aim to replicate their best-ever performance, which saw them reach the semifinals in 1996. *—PTI*

PM MODI TO OPEN KHELO INDIA 2025 IN BIHAR CAPITAL

PATNA, 14 APRIL

Prime Minister Narendra Modi will be in Bihar next month to inaugurate the "Khelo India Youth Games, 2025", Chief Minister Nitish Kumar said here on Monday.

Kumar was addressing a function attended by Union minister for Sports and Youth Affairs Mansukh Mandaviya. "It is a matter of delight for us that Prime Minister Narendra Modi will inaugurate the Khelo India Youth Games, 2025, in Patna on 4 May. The event has provided us with an opportunity to strengthen sporting infrastructure in the state," he said.

The event's logo and its mascot "Shubhankar" were unveiled at the function. According to the office of the Chief Minister, 8,500 athletes and 1,500 technical staff from across the country will take part in the "Khelo India Youth Games, 2025", to be held till May 15 across five districts of Bihar - Patna, Gaya, Nalanda, Bhagalpur and Begusarai. *—PTI*

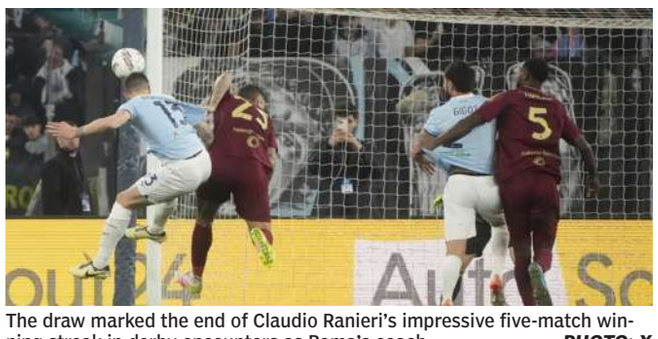
Rome Derby ends in 1–1 draw

ROME, 14 APRIL

In an always-tense Rome derby, the match between Lazio and Roma ended in a 1-1 draw, allowing Roma to extend its unbeaten run to 16 matches while Lazio maintained a narrow lead over their city rivals in the Serie A standings.

Lazio, buoyed by lifelong fan Alessio Romagnoli's early second-half header from a free kick, took the lead shortly after the interval. Roma equalised midway through the second half with a stunning long-range shot from Matias Soule, which deflected off the underside of the crossbar before being validated by goal-line technology.

The draw marked the end of Claudio Ranieri's impressive five-match winning streak in derby encounters as Roma's coach, with the veteran manager anticipated to retire at the season's end. Tensions flared outside the stadium prior to kick-off, with police intervening to prevent clashes between rival fans. Roma goalkeeper Mile Svilar was pivotal in the first half, making several key saves to deny Lazio's Gustav Isaksen.



The draw marked the end of Claudio Ranieri's impressive five-match winning streak in derby encounters as Roma's coach *PHOTO: X*

In other Serie A action, Atalanta revitalised their Champions League aspirations with a crucial 2-0 victory over Bologna, thanks to a goal and assist from Mateo Retegui. Atalanta's win sees them reclaim the third place in the league, in a tight race for qualification. *—PTI*

Lyon triumphs over Auxerre

PARIS, 14 APRIL

In a thrilling Ligue 1 encounter, Lyon secured a 3-1 victory at Auxerre, thanks to forward Georges Mikautadze, who scored one goal and assisted another. This win marked Lyon's fifth victory in their last six league matches, elevating them to fourth place, just one point behind Marseille and ahead of Lille. Mikautadze converted a penalty in the 54th minute before setting up Rayan Cherki's curled finish in the 62nd. Despite Auxerre's Lassine Sinayoko pulling one back, Mikautadze's low cross allowed Alexandre Lacazette to seal the game in the 84th minute.

Next week, Lyon faces local rivals Saint-Etienne, who drew 3-3 against Brest, despite trailing three times. *—PTI*

Madrid beat Alaves 1–0 as Mbappé gets red card

MADRID, 14 APRIL

Real Madrid secured a hard-fought 1-0 victory against Alaves, even after Kylian Mbappé received a red card for a reckless tackle in the first half. The French forward was shown a yellow but had it upgraded to a red following a video review for a studs-up challenge on Alaves' Antonio Blanco, marking his first dismissal since 2019. He will be suspended for next Sunday's league match against Athletic Bilbao.

Madrid's assistant coach, Davide Ancelotti noted, "Kylian is not violent; he has apologised... It was a clear red-card foul."

The game's lone goal came from Eduardo Camavinga in the 34th minute with a powerful shot from outside the area. This victory snapped Madrid's three-game winless streak, including a recent Champions League defeat to Arsenal.

Barcelona, meanwhile, extended its lead at the top of La Liga with a 1-0 win over Leganés on Saturday, placing Madrid four points behind.

In other matches, Athletic Bilbao and Villarreal both recorded important wins in the race for the top four, while Osasuna ended a three-game losing streak by defeating Girona 2-1. Girona remains entrenched in a nine-match winless stretch. *—PTI*

Rory McIlroy wins Masters, finishes career Grand Slam

AUGUSTA, 14 APRIL

Rory McIlroy achieved his long-cherished dream of winning the Masters, overcoming a roller-coaster final round that saw a series of blunders and brilliant moments. After relinquishing a two-shot lead within two holes and then a four-shot advantage in three, McIlroy narrowly missed a crucial 5-foot putt on the 18th.

In a thrilling sudden-death playoff against Justin Rose, however, McIlroy hit a wedge to within three feet for birdie, sealing his first Masters victory and entering golf history as the sixth player to achieve the career Grand Slam. "I didn't make it easy today. I was nervous," he admitted, reflecting on one of the toughest days of his career. *—PTI*

STAYING VIGILANT

On-field umpires check bat size to prevent unfair advantage

NEW DELHI, 14 APRIL

In a departure from the norm, on-field umpires have started making random checks on the dimensions of bats during the ongoing season of the Indian Premier League (IPL) to prevent players from gaining an unfair advantage.

Checking the bat dimensions is a prevalent protocol but till the last edition, the process was followed inside the confines of the dressing room.

However, the BCCI, in its bid to stay more vigilant in times of brutal power-hitting, has allowed the match officials to check any piece of willow if they deem required, even during a live game.

A former BCCI umpire, who has officiated in more than 100 IPL games and many international matches, also expressed his surprise at the development. "The umpires keep a house-shaped bat gauge. If the bat passes through that gauge, it is deemed acceptable. We have all performed bat checks before the start of the innings inside the dressing room. The players handover their willows and the check is done."

"Now the question is, did any player provide one bat for check and used another on the field? If that has happened, then this protocol is welcome," he added.

As per specified dimensions, the width of bat face should not exceed 10.79 cm and thickness (bulged part) cannot exceed 6.7 cm. The maximum width of the edge cannot surpass 4 cm, while the height of the bat should not exceed 96.4 cm from top of handle to the base.

The BCCI, however, was tight-lipped when asked if there was a violation of willow dimension, prompting the random checks. *—PTI*

The umpires keep a house-shaped bat gauge. If the bat passes through that gauge, it is deemed acceptable *PHOTO: X/@IPL*